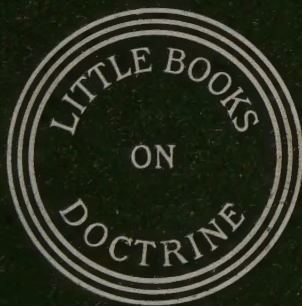


# ATONEMENT

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**A BRIEF STUDY**

Stephen Mason  
**By S. M. MERRILL**, b. 7, 1825-19  
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*"A just God and a Savior."*

—ISAIAH

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## PREFACE.

TO WRITE a small book on a great theme, which has been the subject of learned and able debate for centuries, is not an easy task. I have undertaken it because of strong persuasion that some one ought to do it.

Methodist writers have ably handled the subject of Atonement in large volumes, and in standard works on Systematic Divinity, so that the existing need is not for scientific and critical treatment, but for a plain statement of the doctrine, which will serve to guide and help those who do not read the more elaborate discussions.

Thousands of our young people are continuously exposed to adverse influences, arising from loose and fallacious teachings in current literature and popular pulpits, while

there is scarcely anything in the shape of a book of proper size to be put in their hands, which so presents the doctrines of the Church as to be a safe guide through the perplexities created by the erroneous statements and implications with which they are brought in contact. The need is for a concise statement of the doctrine, with enough recognition of theories and controversies to awaken thought, and to put the reader on guard against the hasty acceptance of plausible statements which are as misleading by their implications as by their assertions.

The aim of this little volume is to meet this demand. Of course, it is not exhaustive in any direction. It scarcely attempts a formal and consecutive argument on the main question. It avoids as much as possible dealing with original terms and translations, omits the critical examination of prepositions, and only touches the literature of the subject. Much self-denial was required to keep out of these fields. It is hoped, however, that



its statements are sufficiently clear and strong to be helpful to those needing help, and to assist in fortifying those who need to be fortified in this essential doctrine of our faith.

Those who read the "fathers" and the writers of mediæval times, and the discussions of the period of the Reformation, are not expected to find much interest in this monograph. The readers of Watson, and Pope, and Raymond, and Whedon, and Foster, and Miley, and other standard writers of our Church, will regard it as meager and unsatisfactory because of the omissions above noted; but it was not projected for the benefit of this class. There are scores of busy laymen, Sunday-school teachers, officers of the Epworth League, and even young ministers, whose duty it is to help others of less experience than themselves, who may receive benefit from its perusal. It is designed to aid those who have not the time, or are not in circumstances to avail themselves of the advantages which large and costly books afford.

Trusting that it will find a field of usefulness, and prove that its mission is not an imaginary one, and that its adaptation is better than it seems to the writer, I send it forth with earnest prayer for the Divine blessing on book and reader.

S. M. M.

# ATONEMENT.

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## I.

THE subject of the Atonement is so related to the priestly office of Jesus Christ, that it can not be intelligently considered except in connection with that office. It is, therefore, important at the outset of our study, that we recognize the fact that he who is the Redeemer and Savior, is also the High Priest of our profession. The essential function of the priest is to offer sacrifice, and unless in the plan ordained for the salvation of men, there was a sacrifice to be offered to God, it is not easy to conceive why any priestly office was necessary, or why the Son of God should be appointed to such an office. If he was

indeed a priest, then of necessity he must make an offering, and such an offering as became him, and as became the condition and needs of those for whom he ministered. He was not a priest under the law in force at the time of his coming, and could not be, as he was not of the tribe of Levi, but of Judah, and therefore he could not officiate as a priest in the temple, nor in any place or capacity in any worldly sanctuary. If a priest at all, it was in a sense peculiar to himself, in which no one had ever been a priest before him, and no one could be after him. As he was unique in person, he was also unique in office and work, having a mission all his own, which could not be shared or imitated by men on earth or by angels in heaven. He was the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the only God and Savior.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is devoted largely to this office, and was no doubt intended to supply an important link in the chain of revelation, by unfolding the signifi-

cance of the priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This is its distinguishing characteristic. It matters little to us whether this Epistle was written by Paul, or Apollos, or Barnabas, as its apostolic character is manifest on its face, and there is scarcely room for a doubt that it was approved by Paul, who inserted the personal salutations with which it closes. Although the name of the author is not given, it is very clear that it was the production of an "eloquent man," and one who was "mighty in the Scriptures." Its relation to the Old Testament is as striking as its style and its general scope and design. It has been appropriately called an inspired commentary on the Levitical law, showing the typical character of the Mosaic institutions, and setting forth their spiritual import as adumbrations of the person and work of the Messiah. When read in the light of its relation to the typical economy and of its obvious purpose, many expressions in it which were otherwise obscure become lumi-

nous, while its argument becomes pertinent and convincing, revealing a depth and breadth and significance which place it in the forefront of the writings of the New Testament, and give an indescribable charm to its expositions of the Divine method of rescuing men from sin and death through sacrifice. It was evidently written with an immediate view to meeting the wants of converted Hebrews, by leading them to the right method of interpreting their Scriptures and their ceremonial services, and thereby confirming them in the faith of the gospel, and guarding them against the influences tending to draw them away from Christ and back to the law.

The Jews from earliest childhood had been impressed that it was impossible to worship God acceptably, or to come to him in prayer, except through the medium of the priestly office and the offering of sacrifice. This conviction was wrought into the very fibers of their being, and might not be removed. It was, therefore, necessary that they should

know that the gospel was not a system without a priest, and without an altar, and without a sacrifice, as the Judaizing teachers contended; but that it had the true Priest, the true altar, and the true and all-sufficient sacrifice. Thus this Epistle was admirably adapted to meet the wants of those to whom it was addressed, and also to meet the necessities of all who would understand the Holy Scriptures. It lifted thought from type to antitype, from form to substance, from the temporal to the eternal; and it showed that the redemptive work required the exercise of sacerdotal functions in the truest sense, and of the most literal and positive character, such as were impossible to any but the High Priest ordained of God.

The first thing insisted upon was the high personal qualification of Jesus, the Christ, to be the High Priest in contemplation. In the very beginning of the Epistle his Divinity is asserted. He was the Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image

of his person. He was superior to the angels, in that all the angels of God were required to worship him. "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom." In the next chapter his humanity is asserted with equal distinctness and force, declaring that, "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;" and also "that in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Thus the High Priest of our profession is Divine and human, one with God and one with men, fully qualified as Mediator, Advocate, Priest, and Intercessor.

Then, being thus introduced as a man, he is held before us in his human relations, and his dignity and greatness as a man are briefly indicated. First of all, he is greater than



Moses. This was to the Jew a most startling assertion, as Moses, the man of God, the law-giver and founder of the most sacred rites of worship, was the ideal man to Hebrew people; and yet the thought is presented so as not to be offensive. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house. For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a Son over his own house, whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Without disparaging Moses, but crediting him with all that the people of his na-

tion claimed for him, Jesus is exalted above him in personal dignity and office, as the Son of God, while Moses was a servant.

The next point in the argument was to show that the Scriptures contemplated a change of the law of the priesthood, and the raising up of a priest of a different order from that of Aaron, and superior to him. This was essential, for if the law of the Aaronic priesthood were to abide forever, the attempt to prove to the Jews that Jesus of Nazareth, of the tribe Judah, was a lawful priest, would have been vain; for the answer to such an allegation was always at hand, in that Jesus was not of the tribe of Levi, and could not be a priest under the law. But there stood the prediction in their own Scriptures, and plainly in Messianic prophecy, that another priest should arise, not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchisedec, who should be a priest forever, and by direct appointment from God. What could this prophecy mean, and what possible application

could it have, if the law restricting the priestly office to the tribe of Levi should never cease, or could never admit of an exception? When this Scripture was brought to the mind of thoughtful Hebrews, with its evident intention to characterize the Messiah as a priest of God, it must have had a powerful influence in preparing them to receive other statements concerning the typical and temporary character of the Aaronic priesthood—statements which in the absence of this prophecy would not have impressed them in the least. It was, therefore, not only important, but extremely judicious and wise, that the assertion of the necessary change of the law of the priesthood be made in connection with this very peculiar Messianic prophecy. It obviated prejudice, and shed light on what was to them a most perplexing obscurity.

The end to be accomplished in this discussion of the priesthood, was to satisfy the Hebrew converts that in adhering to Jesus as the Messiah, and recognizing him as the

Priest and Savior, they need not abandon Moses, but rather that it was the only way to honor him, and rightly to interpret his law, and carry out his institutions to their ultimate significance and spiritual import. They were familiar with the law, and possessed the usual biases in favor of their ancient ceremonies; but they were somewhat enlightened with reference to the gospel, and their perceptions were quickened as to spiritual things, so that appeals to their understanding touching the higher meaning of their Scriptures were not likely to be lost upon them. This fact is recognized by the apostle in every step of his argument. He was not writing to heathens, nor to novices in the use of the holy writings, but to "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," who were acquainted with the things he was seeking to elevate in their thoughts to their highest and best significance. They were also predisposed to accept his interpretations, as they had become disciples, and were ready to hold fast to the

gospel if they could do it without abandoning Moses and the prophets. This condition of things accounts for the brevity of the apostle's statements at some points where we might wish for greater elaboration.

The next thing claiming attention is the fact, which is given with emphasis, that this man, great as he was, did not assume the office of Priest without special authorization or direct appointment from God. "No man taketh this honor to himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron." This recognition of the Divine appointment of the Aaronic priesthood and the call of Aaron was important, and the apostle gives it due prominence, making it the model and illustration of the call of Christ to the spiritual functions of that sacred office. "Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee." As Aaron was called of God, and as Melchisedec did not inherit the office from ancestors, but received

it by immediate appointment from God, so Christ was called as was Aaron, and appointed as was Melchisedec, and made a priest forever after the power of an endless life. His commission was distinct, clear, unique. Although constituted a priest "after the similitude of Melchisedec," in that office he stood alone, having neither predecessor nor successor. His was an unchanging priesthood.

His greatness in that office is shown by the greatness of his person, by the greatness of his sacrifice, and the greatness of his achievement. He was the Son and image of God, he offered himself, and he put an end to typical offerings, and obtained eternal redemption for men. Being superior to Moses, to Aaron, and to Abraham, he measures up to the pattern set in Melchisedec, to whom Abraham paid tithes, and from whom he received blessing. Melchisedec, king of righteousness and king of peace, was the typical priest of God, with none like him or equal to him, till the coming of the great High Priest. The

contrasts between Christ as priest and the priests under the law are numerous; such as that those of the Aaronic order are made priests by inheritance as sons of Levi, while he is directly appointed; they are admitted to the office without an oath, but he with an oath; and they can not continue in office by reason of death, but he continueth ever, having an abiding priesthood. In every respect he ranks all other priests, and so fills the office as to supersede the necessity of any other priest on earth or in heaven. As all priests and all orders of priesthood were types of him and his office, and were fulfilled when he came and exercised his functions; so also in him, and with him, the priestly office was transferred from earth to heaven, so that since the day of his ascension there has been no priest in the Church on earth, as there is neither need nor room for any.

The priests under the law offered gifts and sacrifices for sins, but they were offerings which could never take away sin. They were

bulls, and goats, and lambs, offerings which could avail to the ceremonial purifying of the flesh, but could not purge the conscience from dead works. They were powerless as to the inner nature. "But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" His was the priesthood of a better tabernacle, a better covenant, with a better offering, the only offering that could take away sin and purify the soul. The perfection of this offering and service is seen in



the fact that it could not be repeated. "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others, for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." One more passage may be cited, showing the completeness of the sacrifice, and the impossibility of repeating it. "By the which

will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sin. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified."

We sum up, then—that Jesus Christ was the one and only great High Priest of the gospel dispensation; that in him all the typical priesthoods of former dispensations were fulfilled and abolished; that he was called to this office by the appointment and oath of God; that he was in reality what Melchisedec was figuratively, the Priest of God, and the King of righteousness, and the King or Prince of peace; that as Priest he offered himself in sacrifice unto God for the sins of mankind; that this offering was made once for all through the Eternal Spirit; that it was a

sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; that the offering once made need not and can not be repeated; that when he passed into the heavens through his own blood, the priestly office passed with him; that since his ascension there is no priest or priestly office on the earth; and, finally, that all pretended priest-hoods and all pretended offerings of Christ in any sacrament or ceremony in the Church on earth, are vain deceits and delusive superstitions.

The mystery in the sacrificial death of the Son of God, is in the fact that he himself was active as the priest in making this offering—that he laid down his life voluntarily, and was not merely passive as a victim of martyrdom. This is undoubtedly true, and to the careful student it presents no serious difficulty. He had sought to prepare his disciples for the event, and for the interpretation of it, by predicting it, and by assuring them that his enemies could have no power over his

life except by special permission. "No man taketh my life from me. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received from my Father." This early assertion of having full power over his own life, and the clear intimation that he might find occasion to give it up, and then to resume it, has its highest and only explanation in his priestly office, and proves that while his enemies were active in his condemnation and crucifixion, he was passive as to their designs, and yet active in the priestly function of offering himself through the Eternal Spirit unto God. As the Father spared not his only begotten Son, but delivered him up freely for us all, so the Son spared not himself, but gave himself unresistingly into the hands of the smiters, and was led as a lamb to the slaughter. In this act of self-sacrifice, the consummation of all the prophecies, types, and promises of the Scriptures, and of the predictions of Jesus himself, he made reconciliation—or atone-

ment—for the sins of the people. His blood was shed for the remission of sins, according to his own words at the institution of the supper, which was the ordained memorial of his death. He died by the cruelty of his enemies; yet was his blood the blood of sacrifice, the price paid for human redemption.

It is important that, in all this study, we keep the two facts in mind, that the death of Jesus Christ was his own priestly act, the offering of himself, and that it was the price paid by which we were bought off or redeemed from the penalty of sin. This is not theory nor conjecture, but Divinely-attested fact—the most wonderful fact in the history of God's dealings with men. "We are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." His blood was his life, and his life was given for men. Then if, indeed, his blood was the ransom, the price paid for our purchase, the procuring cause of our sal-

vation, there is found in his death every element of an atonement—the sacrifice, the oblation, the satisfaction for sin, with the result of a possible reciprocal reconciliation between God, whose law was broken, and man, the offender and alien. In the absence of the necessity for this reconciliation through this Divinely-appointed sacrifice there is no explanation of the fact that Jesus Christ was the Priest of God, as there is no real meaning in any other priestly office apart from its relation to this one.

## II.

SINCE the atonement, as we conceive of it, was the price paid for human redemption, or what, in Old Testament language, would be the covering of sin, or its expiation, it is difficult to single it out, or to separate it in our thoughts for contemplation as a distinct and complete something, having a nature and mode and manifestation of its own. In fact, it does not stand alone. It is rather a link in a chain, the part of a whole, having constant relations with antecedents and results. The occasion and necessity for it, as well as its purpose and effects, direct and indirect, must come into the account before we can exercise an intelligent belief with regard to it. The word "redemption" is more comprehensive and easier of apprehension than the

word "atonement," and, therefore, of more frequent occurrence in the New Testament; and the proper interpretation of redemption brings out about all that is meant or expressed by the word "atonement."

The word "atonement" can scarcely be called a New Testament word at all. It occurs but once in the entire Book, and that where it is not a happy translation of the original, which would be better rendered "reconciliation." It occurs in Romans v, 11, "By whom we have now received the atonement." There is no good sense in which the believer receives that which is properly the atonement; but he does receive the result of it—the reconciliation—the word which more fitly represents the term employed by the apostle, as well as the experience which he describes. Through faith in Christ we do receive the reconciliation. No loss would be sustained and no error committed if this passage should be rendered, as in the margin and in the Revised Version, "By whom we



have now received the reconciliation," thus eliminating the word "atonement" from the New Testament entirely. It is an Old Testament word, used in connection with the presentation of sin offerings in the ceremonial services, which were undoubtedly typical representations of the work which Christ did when he offered himself in sacrifice for sin. If its meaning, as used in the Old Testament, be carried over to Christ, and applied to his work, as has been done, there is no impropriety in its use, and no erroneous doctrine is inculcated thereby. In fact, this practice has become so common that it is next to impossible to discontinue it, if its discontinuance were desirable; but it is also true that the whole of the New Testament doctrine of redemption and salvation could be expressed without the word atonement, so that its discontinuance in theology would not be as serious a loss as the first suggestion of it would seem to indicate. The essential fact would remain, and its interpretation would be pos-

sible, if we should employ only the words of the New Testament. It is not the word that we contend for, but the work of the Lord in redeeming the race by the shedding of his blood. But we can not dispense with the word "redemption." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price."

Theories of the atonement are numerous, but we hear little of theories of redemption. This is a plain transaction. A slave is in bondage. A price is paid to procure his freedom. That is redemption. A soldier is captured and made a prisoner. A price is paid for his freedom. That price is his ransom; and the whole transaction is redemption. The price is the satisfaction to him who holds the slave or the prisoner; and the discharge is the result of the satisfaction. If we speak

of the price as the atonement, or of the act of paying the price as making atonement, we do not go astray; and when we call the atonement the satisfaction rendered to Divine justice, or to the law of God, which is the same thing, and the discharge of the sinner from legal bondage as the result, we speak correctly and within the limits which the facts warrant.

The history of theories of atonement is a wonderful record, not without interest; but since theories are not to figure largely in this study, the history of them will have little place. We are more concerned about the facts which we can grasp and understand. It is a fact that Jesus Christ suffered death on the cross for the sins of men. This fully-attested fact is not affected, as a fact, by any explanation we attempt of its contents, or of its necessity and purpose. He was himself without sin, yet he suffered for sin and for sinners. There was, therefore, somewhat in his relation to God and to man and to the

law of God that made it possible and right for him, as an innocent and holy Person, to suffer all that he actually did suffer in his humiliation and death; and so far as we can see, the principle is the same, whether he suffered as a martyr or as an example of self-sacrifice, or as a substitute to redeem those for whom he suffered. No conjecture of ours as to the purpose of his death, or as to the expediency or in expediency or the justice or injustice of requiring or permitting him, as an innocent man, to suffer for the guilty, can alter the established fact that he suffered, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Whether we believe in or reject the doctrine of vicarious suffering, we are alike under obligation to accept the fact, and to harmonize it as best we can with the essential principles of justice and right. In this regard nothing is gained by forsaking the evangelical faith. He either died for sinners, or he did not. If he did, there was no wrong in it; but if he did not,

our preaching is vain, and our faith is vain—both ours and theirs who hold any other theory of atonement than the vicarious. We must either accept or reject the fact; and if we accept it, as recorded in the Gospels, we are bound to hold it as compatible with justice, holiness, and love under the government of God, whether we can see the harmony or not. Even if clouds and darkness be round about him, “righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.”

Although we can not presume to fathom the depths of the Divine nature, we dare not attribute injustice to the Almighty. While his perfections transcend all our thoughts, righteousness and holiness characterize every act of his, however deeply its motive may be hidden from us. If anything really done by him will not harmonize with our conception of his nature, then not his nature, but our conception of it, is at fault. Hence, if it seem wrong to us, or inconsistent with the goodness and love of God, that

he should in any way lay our iniquities upon his only begotten Son, the conclusion is not that no such act of his took place, but that our perception of the nature of the act was imperfect, and that our reasoning as to what is or is not compatible with the justice and love of God is inaccurate. When we make the nature of God the ground of our reasoning, as we often do, we reason, not from what we know to what we do not know, but necessarily from what we do not fully understand to conclusions which seem inevitable, but which, after all, may not accord with the deeper nature of things, which lies beyond our comprehension. We can only reason from God's nature to the extent that it is revealed to our understanding, and from that revelation to conclusions which accord with our knowledge of God and of the event embraced in the conclusion. This necessary limitation does not require or even permit the rejection of the vicarious suffering of Christ on the ground of its own incompatibility with the

nature of God; for we know too little of the nature of God and of the motives and reasons for the suffering of Christ to be qualified to pronounce positive judgment on this point from the impressions we receive in our imperfect state of knowledge. There are infinite possibilities in the Divine perfections which we can not know, as there are heights and depths in the love of God which archangels can only adore, but never be able to understand.

We come back to the astounding fact that Christ died for sinners. What is the explanation? Was there just occasion for this extraordinary event? Was there necessity for it? Was there an exigency in the government of God and in the condition of the human race that demanded so great a sacrifice? Could or would the Almighty enter upon such a scheme of redemption in the absence of the highest conceivable reason and necessity for it? These questions arise unbidden, and drive us to the nearest pos-

sible approach to a glance at the situation when redemption was determined. Of course, the desired point of view is not fully accessible. We can not place ourselves by the side of the Almighty before the foundation of the world was laid, and look at the conditions and possibilities and the alternatives, as they appeared to the Divine thought. But we must imagine that there were contingencies, emergencies, and alternatives present in his mind. The world of possibilities was not less than the world of actuality. As he surveyed the scene, the rebellion of man, which was then a contingency, was foreseen with its dire results, and the provisional redemption ordained. This included the gift and sacrifice of the Son of God, the arrest and suspension of the penalty of sin after it was incurred, the restoration or renewal of a probation for man, the permission to multiply under the covenant of grace, with the final manifestation of the whole scheme under the gospel economy.



It was a wonderful scheme, with many essential parts, each adjusted to its place, and all linked together with mutual helpfulness and dependence. The alternative, so far as we can see it, was the execution of the penalty of transgression, with the resultant failure of the development of creation in the actual existence of the posterity of the first sinners, they perishing without offspring. This alternative was not permitted, God purposing redemption through the incarnation of his Son, who came forth from the bosom of the Father in the fullness of time, to bear the burden laid upon him, and to accomplish the work of redemption in fact. God sent his Son into the world that the world through him might be saved. This is the theme of our study. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Is this true in fact? Did Jesus Christ become the "propitiation for our sins?" What

is "propitiation?" "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, and he is the propitiation for our sins, and also for the sins of the whole world." Yes, Jesus Christ is the "propitiation" for our sins, and we must find out what propitiation means. Just now we only insist that it has a meaning. No one will question that. It is a word of great force. It comes to us in New Testament usage, without special definition, and must bear the meaning usually given it; but it is so associated with Jesus Christ and his priestly work that its meaning must be found in what he did and suffered in making himself an offering for sin. The apostle tells us that Jesus Christ "was set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood," so that the "propitiation" is closely related to the blood of Christ or to his sacrificial death. Propitiation and atonement are nearly related. If not identical, they are inseparable. Where one is found, the other is also. If Christ, by his death, became the

propitiation for our sins, it was because or in the fact that his death atoned for our sins. Propitiation belongs to the priestly service, as does the atonement, and relates to the covering of guilt, not by denial and concealment, but by confession and expiation.

It will be observed that we are not yet discussing any theory of atonement. Our present aim is to identify the fact, to gain knowledge of the act of Christ in which the atonement is found. Then theories and explanations, with difficulties and objections, will come later. The all-comprehensive fact is the death which Jesus died. If there was any atonement in his mission and work on earth, it was in his death. His spotless life of active obedience was necessary to the completeness of his personal character, necessary to the work of his ministry among men, and necessary as a preparation for his sacrifice; but it was not the ransom, not any part of the price paid for our redemption. His

teaching was all-important. How the world would be impoverished without it! But his teaching formed no part of his sacrifice. Redemption was not in his teaching. His miracles had their place, their witnessing and evidential value, and will have till the end of time; but these were not the ransom. His priestly office was not called into activity in any of these, nor in any event in his life, till the period of preparation for his death. Nothing that he did prior to the agony of Gethsemane can be counted as priestly service. All was preparatory to the final event, when he assumed the priestly function, made his soul an offering for sin, passed through the veil, entered into the Holy of Holies, and with his own blood consecrated the new and living way to heaven, whither he has gone as our forerunner, and where he ever liveth to make intercession for us.

Let emphasis be given the statement that the atonement was in the death of Christ. There is meaning in it. There is a disposi-

tion of late among those who deny the sacrificial and substitutionary office of the death of Christ, and of course deny its atoning efficacy, to enlarge the use of the word "atonement" so as to take into it all our Savior's active life of teaching, his prayers, his self-denials, and his miracles, and also to extend it to include his resurrection from the dead, making all constituent parts of the atonement. To make it mean so much that it means nothing is an adroit way of destroying it. This modern method of treating the subject has some superficial attractiveness in it, as it gives opportunity for the fluent use of Scriptural phrases, with the seeming intent to magnify rather than belittle the atonement, while in fact it displaces it in its true character, and substitutes for it that which is not atonement, being no part of the ransom price, and not having the least element of propitiation for sin. This strange habit of making the whole of the life and death and resurrection of Christ atoning is

carried so far by some writers as to include in the atonement all the Divine activity in working salvation in men through the power of the Holy Spirit. Of course, this is a violent abuse of language. It distorts the meaning of the word, both by depriving it of its proper import, and by imposing upon it a sense and use it was never intended to bear. The practice is scarcely less than a deception of the innocent, an imposition most reprehensible; and yet it is possible that some who have fallen into it have first deceived themselves into the belief that they have found a legitimate interpretation of the Word and work of God. By using the words "redemption" and "atonement" interchangeably, as may be done in many instances, and then overlooking all distinction between redemption by price or in the sense of purchase and the actual redemption in the sense of deliverance—provisional redemption and applied redemption—one might fall into the habit of speaking of redemption in

the sense of reformation or spiritual regeneration, which would not be a serious departure from propriety; but to go so far as to use the word "atonement" in this way is inexcusable. Redemption by price was redemption by atonement, as the price was the "precious blood of Christ," the shedding of which was the one atoning act; but redemption by power or by the making over of the provisional redemption to the person receiving it is the continuous work carried on in the world by the agency of the Holy Spirit. This continuous work is not atoning, but resultant from the atonement which was completed when Christ died.

This latest and somewhat specious use of the word "atonement" is sometimes sought to be justified by a seemingly innocent sort of play on the English word, but which is utterly without force or authority, besides being preposterous, when the facts are all considered. It consists in separating the syllables of the word, making it "at-one-ment,"

which is an arbitrary thing, the accident of orthography, and a departure from the proper use of the verb to *atone*, whence the noun is derived. It is intended to compel the word to yield the sense of reconciliation, or the act of becoming one, which is indeed the effect of the atonement, but not the atonement itself, which is causative. This English word is the equivalent of a Hebrew word, which admits of no such manipulation. It is sheer folly to play with the translation as if that could affect the meaning of the original. Both the English word and the original bear the sense of appease or satisfy for an offense. The Old Testament use of the word passes readily into the gospel terminology, and justifies the sense we attach to it. It primarily conveyed the idea of a covering or the hiding of the sin for which atonement was **made**. When forgiven, the sin was put away, covered up, hidden. The atonement did it. The lid of the ark of the covenant covered the tables of the law, and became the mercy-



seat, where the visible token of the Divine Presence appeared. That was the place where God and man met together, where pardon was bestowed, and the offender accepted. In the tabernacle and in the temple the blood of the atoning sacrifice sprinkled the mercy-seat and ceremonially covered the guilt of the transgressor, shadowing forth the real sacrifice, which was to be the covering of the sins of men—the “propitiation,” the atonement found in the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

### III.

THE doctrine of atonement, as held by the Methodist Episcopal Church, is set forth in very general terms in the Articles of Religion and in the Ritual for the administration of the Lord's Supper. The word "atonement" does not appear in these Articles, nor in the Ritual, as it does not in the New Testament; but, nevertheless, the substance of it is so declared that we can not easily mistake the meaning of the Church, and need not be in doubt or darkness with regard to it. While not one of the Twenty-five Articles is given directly to this subject, the language found in the Second Article and in the Twentieth Article, without using the word "atonement," declares the belief of the Church with sufficient distinctness and fullness.

The Second Article, after stating that the Son was of one substance with the Father, and took upon him man's nature in the womb of the Virgin, affirms that Christ "truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for the actual sins of men." The Twentieth Article gives us these words: "The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; and there is no other satisfaction for sin but that alone." In the service consecrating the elements for the Lord's Supper, the elder prays: "Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who of thy tender mercy didst give thine only Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption; who made there, by his oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, and did institute," etc.

It should be borne in mind that the Articles of Religion and the Ritual were framed with particular reference to the differences between the Roman Catholics and the Churches of the Reformation, and that much of the peculiar wording was determined by the controversies then existing. Of course, under the circumstances, some shadings of thought are given which were applicable to conditions then present, and which are somewhat obscure at the present time; but, nevertheless, the general teaching is for all times and all conditions. The Methodist doctrine of atonement is contained in these authoritative utterances; and Methodist ministers and people are properly held to the maintenance of the faith thus set forth and to its natural and rightful interpretation.

The absence of the word "atonement" from the Articles and the Ritual is not to be construed as authorizing the indulgence of every one's own conjectures or vagaries; for the terms employed convey the true idea of atone-

ment, and indicate the interpretation the Church requires and the doctrine intended to be expressed when the word is used. Even if the language be somewhat antiquated, the substance of doctrine is easily understood, is readily traceable to the primitive Church and to apostolic times, and flows directly from the Sacred Oracles. The modern style of the opposition is to excite prejudice against it by speaking of it as of mediæval origin, as coming from "schoolmen," as being "Latin theology," and the like, turning it over to the class of obsolete speculations against which it is, and ever has been, a living protest. The better way is to trace it to its real origin, find out its real intent and meaning, and compare it as it is with the Holy Scriptures.

The peculiar phraseology of the Second Article requires attention at this point. All who deny vicarious atonement vigorously assail the language of this Article as containing erroneous doctrine and flatly contradict-

ing the language of the Scriptures. There is just enough of the appearance of fact in this last statement to attract the attention of the superficial, and to awaken the suspicion that the whole adverse allegation may be well founded. The statement that Jesus Christ was crucified "to reconcile his Father to us" is held up as contrary to the teaching of the apostles, that Christ died to reconcile men to God, and not God to men—that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." This seeming variation of thought is entitled to candid consideration.

It should be noted, in the first place, that if the language of the Article objected to contains error, as is alleged, the erroneous statement has reference to reconciliation, and affects our view of that doctrine, and not necessarily the doctrine of the atonement. It is easy to conceive that the same atonement might be necessary to reconcile men to God as to reconcile God to men. This we assume to be true, in fact. Then, if the statement

had been reversed, or should be now reversed, and the allegation put forth that Christ died "to reconcile men to his Father," the doctrine of the atonement would not be modified in the slightest degree. The atonement was in the sacrificial death, not in its purpose, or design, or results. The practice of confounding an act with its design and result is by no means uncommon, especially with hasty thinkers; but it is never conducive to clearness of vision or expression. Whatever view we take of reconciliation, the atonement must be regarded as its antecedent, and as, in an important sense, causative of that result.

In the next place, in order to obtain a right view of reconciliation and fairly to interpret the language of the Article in question, we must go back to the antecedent relation of the parties, and consider the attitude of each to the other, and also the necessary steps which each must take in order to overcome the alienation and effect the desired harmony.

Sin separated between man and his Maker. In any possible human conception of the situation, man was the offender, and God was the offended party. Was there not reciprocity or mutuality in the alienation? The disharmony was great, and, in the nature of things, the opposition must have been reciprocal. Man turned away from God and against God; and God could not remain in harmony with man while man was in rebellion. The gulf between them was deep and wide. God's nature could no more harmonize with man in sin than holiness could fellowship with unholiness. Here, then, is the situation: God's nature antagonizes man's nature, God's holiness antagonizes man's unholiness; yet reconciliation is sought. Man, the offender, is helpless. For him to bridge the chasm is impossible. He can not repair the breach; he can not undo the wrong; he can not atone or satisfy for the offense committed, if so inclined; and we can not see that he has any inclination to do so, or any



desire to that end. God must move, if any movement be made towards reconciliation, and he must provide the means and prescribe the terms if restored harmony shall ever become possible. God is sovereign, and he is also a righteous ruler. His authority has been set at naught, and his law broken, so that, in restoring rebels, he must relinquish his claim and lower the standard of righteousness in government, or demand satisfaction. Every perfection of his being impels to the latter. An atonement is necessary; but man can not make it. If made, God himself must make it—make it to himself and to the just requirements of righteous moral government, yet so that it shall be for man, and be accounted as if by man. Here is the whole problem of redemption. At the foundation of it lies the necessity and principle of vicariousness or substitution. In the language of men—the only language available—man was alienated and in rebellion, and God was offended, grieved, angry,

and, by the holiness of his nature, opposed to sin in every degree and form. The difference was reciprocal, and the reconciliation must be reciprocal. But God was gracious, and mercifully inclined to reconciliation prior to any step being taken in that direction. His love of pity yearned for the restoration of the alienated, and moved the plan that would satisfy the demands of justice and holiness. Of his predisposition to reconciliation there can be no question. No sacrifice was necessary to induce that. His willingness to have the restoration effected was not secured by the atonement, but that it was which secured the atonement.

Then, assuming that the Father was antecedently inclined to the reconciliation, that his compassion yearned over the alienated, and sought the restoration, in what sense can it be said that he was reconciled through the sacrifice of Christ? It must be exactly in the sense in which he was angry, grieved, offended. If his righteous indignation

against sin was an element in his government, and if unbending justice demanded satisfaction in order to the outflow of his compassion, then the legal obstructions to forgiveness on repentance must be removed; and the removal of them is the turning away of his wrath, well and forcefully expressed as the reconciliation of the Father. It became possible thereby for the Father's love to reach the objects of his compassion, righteously to offer them pardon and reconciliation, his justice, love, and holiness blending in the rescue of the perishing. It was a governmental as well as a personal transaction, in which God's opposition to sin might be turned aside from the penitent, and pardon flow freely in answer to trusting faith. In this sense—and only in this sense—was the Father reconciled. It is first a provisional reconciliation, as redemption is first a provisional redemption; and then it becomes actual in personal experience to all who receive the reconciliation. If there is any force

or truth in the assertion that "God is angry with the wicked," and if there is any truth or meaning in the declaration that his "anger is turned away," then is it also true that through the death of his Son the Father is reconciled to men. In other words, in that sense precisely in which the alienation was reciprocal, the reconciliation is reciprocal, as of necessity it must be. Then, through the merits of Christ's death and the personal faith of the penitent, the reciprocal reconciliation becoming a fact, the restored alien can say with the prophet, "O Lord, I will praise thee. Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." Then can he also sing,—

"My God is reconciled,  
His pard'ning voice I hear;  
He owns me for his child;  
I can no longer fear."

Thus it appears that this doctrine of mutual reconciliation is not the dreadful thing

it is sometimes represented, is not tainted with heresy, does not spring from that mysterious mine of mystery and error, "the Latin theology," and bears no opposition to any Scripture that assures us that Christ died to reconcile men to God. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." We gladly respond to this truth; and yet the challenged sentence in our Second Article presents a phase of the doctrine of reconciliation which is true in itself, which harmonizes with the scope and tenor of the Scriptures, and is of vital interest to all who would intelligently ponder the deep things of God.

Returning to the Disciplinary language cited as containing the doctrine of atonement, it should be noted that there is no attempt to show how the death of Christ availed to effect the redemption and reconciliation of men. The fact is affirmed with all clearness;

but all that relates to the how and the wherefore is left where every question concerning the mode of the Divine existence and procedure must be left, with the unsearchable mysteries not yet to be explored. It should therefore surprise no one that our Church develops no theory of atonement intended to unfold all the mysteries of redemption. Hard questions are sometimes asked which we can not answer satisfactorily; but they relate mostly to the method and reasons for God's action, and have no place in the proper interpretation of his Word or providence. If we fail to account for some things which revelation asserts, and which we believe on the testimony given, we are not in condemnation for inconsistency, nor are we alone in the failure. The so-called Liberalists—Unitarians, Universalists, and what not, who deny vicarious atonement—fail utterly to explain or account for the terms employed in the sacred writings expressive of atonement and redemption, or even to give any rational in-

terpretation of the purpose or motive of the incarnation of the Son of God at all. They can not possibly assign him a mission worthy of his name. So long as they believe that God could forgive sins on the simple ground of repentance, without atonement, they are estopped from connecting Christ's coming and death with pardon; and, while holding that the natural relation of God to men, as Creator and Father, secured to all men the benefit of eternal salvation, beyond the possibility of forfeiture, they are cut off from attributing the blessedness of salvation here or in heaven to the advent of Christ into this world. Indeed, upon the ground which they assume, there is no possibility of accounting for the tremendous fact of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, or to show any sense in which, by his death, he became the Savior of men. All their ready utterances to the effect that he was a Divine Teacher, that he made salvation known, that he taught the way of life, that he revealed the Father, that

he set a perfect example, and exemplified the truth, and died in confirmation of it, are in the line of right; but they fall infinitely short of the deeper and broader truth, that he also became "the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him."

The burden of the allegations of the Church is that the death of Jesus Christ was a sacrifice, a propitiation, and a satisfaction for the sins of the world. As we have seen, all that procured the redemption and the reconciliation was in his death. There was no other meritorious cause. His active work, his miracles, his teaching, his example, had each its place in his mission; and his resurrection from the dead, the crowning glory of his visible career, had its special office; but only his death was the price of redemption. "He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification." "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree."

There ought to be no difficulty at all in accepting the fact that Jesus Christ was the



“propitiation for our sins.” This is too clearly stated in the Scriptures to be called in question. In our thought it means to purchase or procure favor from one who was displeased, or had grounds of displeasure towards us. We never use it to express the favor of one who has never been offended; and so it bears very nearly the meaning of expiation or atonement. Christ by his death propitiated God, in that God was justly offended by our sins, and by propitiation procured the outflow of Divine compassion, which was obstructed by human guilt. It did not change the nature or the mind of God, nor originate in him the disposition to be gracious to men; but it provided for the removal of all hindrances, so that God could, without detriment to his holiness or justice, or any loosening of righteous administration, extend the offer of salvation to sinners, which his original love prompted, on terms made possible to them. As before explained, it averted what the Scriptures call “the wrath

of God." It appeased whatever there is in God which the Bible calls "anger." It propitiated him in whatever sense propitiation was possible or necessary, and in no other sense. In all this nothing is attributed to God that does not belong to him—nothing of human passion, or weakness, or changeableness. There is something in God which opposes sin and is excited to activity by sin. The Scriptures call it "wrath." We do well to follow the Scriptures. Whatever it is, it is inseparable from holiness, and makes propitiation possible and necessary. While the propitiation does not change God's nature, nor create in him any disposition or affection he did not possess before, it must be conceded that it changes the Divine attitude towards all who would avail themselves of it. It means this, or it means nothing. This much is taught alike in the Scriptures and in our standards of doctrine; and with this truth so clearly revealed, every disciple of Christ may confidently face the fault-findings

of this critical age, the boasts of liberalistic pretentiousness, and the sneers of open or covert infidelity, knowing that his interpretations of God's Word harmonize with the consensus of the best thought of the best thinkers the Church has ever produced.

In the language of the Twentieth Article of Religion, above quoted, the word "satisfaction" occurs, coupled with "propitiation," in describing the effect of the one offering made by the High Priest of our profession. It also occurs in the prayer of consecration in the service of the Lord's Supper. It must be therefore that the Church holds to the idea of satisfaction in the atonement. This is not a Scriptural word, like propitiation, but it is a good word to use in this connection, as it expresses very nearly the true meaning of atonement. Profound and learned discussions have taken place in considering the sense in which the death of Christ made satisfaction for sin—whether God is sensitive or impassable, whether he

feels pleasure or grief and is personally affected by the actions of his creatures, or whether all terms so representing him are necessarily figurative, while his whole attitude towards sin has respect to his relation as a moral ruler. The topic is interesting, but its discussion is not necessary to the present study; and our limits forbid entrance into so wide a field of speculation. It is enough for our purpose to assume that satisfaction was rendered when all the requirements of the situation were met, as they were by the great sacrifice, so as to make sure the purpose for which he was ordained from the foundation of the world. If God's holiness and justice had claims to be met before the provisional redemption could be complete and be made available, they were met and satisfied. If the law of God had claims, they were met and satisfied. If any principle of rectoral righteousness had claims growing out of man's rebellion, they were met and satisfied; and, finally, if aught in the Divine

nature answering to human sensibility, emotion, wish, desire, pleasure, or grief had any claim needing or demanding satisfaction in order to the acceptance and effectiveness of the atonement, that element in God, whatever it was, was met and satisfied. While Jesus was yet in the conflict beneath the clouds of earth, the voice of the Father came to him from the opening heavens, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Then, in view of the meaning of the word and of its near approach to the essential idea of an atonement, the expediency of using this word "satisfaction" in this connection is apparent. But when the idea of satisfaction is carried to the extent of indicating the infliction of the penalty of sin on the substitute, insuperable objections arise, which will not down at our bidding. The satisfaction which the Church affirms is not of that kind. A penal atonement is no part of Methodist doctrine. The satisfaction was not the judicial infliction of the penalty, but a condition

brought about by the voluntary offering of the Mediator, which love and justice accepted in lieu of the execution of the penalty, and which availed to the establishment of the new probation and the opening of the way for the compassion of God to reach the objects of his pity, without giving license to sin, or setting aside any claim of public justice, or loosening any bond of rectoral righteousness. Used in this sense, the word has a rightful place in our interpretation of the scheme of redemption, and we do well to go on repeating in the service of the holy communion, as we have done from the beginning, that his death is "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." Some of our most distinguished writers, who are worthy of the veneration accorded them, object to the word "satisfaction" in this connection, as if it necessarily carried with it the objectionable idea of the infliction of the penalty on the Divinely-appointed sub-

stitute; but we do not so understand it, and do not think the Church intends any such meaning to attach to it. Our good Dr. Miley was too easily frightened at the use of this word, and failed to strengthen his position and his generally admirable argument for vicarious sacrifice, by swinging so far away from the word "satisfaction." He conceded far too much to the defenders of penal atonement by admitting almost all they claim as the meaning of "satisfaction." We prefer to use the word as the Church uses it, and find its use perfectly consistent with our conception of an atonement which is not penal, but is ample in its provision to meet its exact purpose.

## IV.

HAVING identified the doctrine of atonement, as taught by the Church, it is important that we briefly consider the necessity of such a Divine interposition before advancing to the fuller development of the theological aspects of the subject, with the incidental questions to be encountered in the progress of our study.

As it now appears, the culmination of our Lord's mission in this world was the sacrifice of himself for the sins of mankind. All besides this was preparatory, incidental, and consequential. With the hour of his death in view, he could calmly say, "But for this cause came I unto this hour." As he came on a mission, so he came with a purpose; and to the accomplishment of his purpose he devoted all the energies of his being. Oc-



casionally, as the shadow of the coming crisis seemed to cross the horizon of his daily life, a tone of sadness appeared in his words, as when, foretelling the results of his teaching, he said, "But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" No other one in heaven above or on earth beneath ever entered upon a task so great, so important, so full of sacrifice, or so wonderful in contemplated results. The occasion for it must have been equal to its magnitude, imperative as righteousness, and unyielding as the pillars of heaven. In the thought of God the necessity of the sacrifice must have been as controlling as was its value to the moral universe. Whatever the inspiration of his mission, or whatever its scope or its contents or its cost, nothing entered into it that was not necessary to its completeness, nothing not required by the emergencies to be met. In view of the tremendous interests involved, we dare not believe that any step was taken in purposing,

planning, or preparing for it, or in executing it, that was not sincere, or that had not a vital relation to the work to be done. Nothing entered into it for display or for spectacular effect—nothing superfluous. The character of the parties to it, as well as the grandeur and solemnity of the undertaking, forbid all thought of mere pretentiousness in connection with it.

With this statement of principles, which may be regarded as self-evident, the conclusion comes naturally, if not indeed unavoidably, that there was occasion amounting to an emergency or moral necessity for the mission of the Son of God into this world, and for all he did and suffered, in order to maintain the Divine government, and to secure moral benefits that were in jeopardy.

In asserting necessity in this connection, it is not to be understood that there was any uncontrollable fate, or any impelling power over or upon the Deity forcing the mission—any attribute of his own, or any force extra-

neous to himself, constraining him or interfering with the spontaneity of his gracious action—but the necessity has reference to the end proposed and the means of securing it. If the end was predetermined, the provision for it must be made; and the means could not be omitted. Then, in view of the principles involved, there is neither hazard nor presumption in asserting that God himself could not bring about the result without the means—could not, because of the moral principles imbedded in his nature, which were the only restraints possible to him.

The easy and often unwise habit of resolving everything into the sovereignty of God, and ascribing to him the power to work his will in all things, often misleads to seriously unsafe conclusions. His sovereignty was conspicuously exercised in determining whether to put the plan of redemption into operation or not; but when the perfections of his being determined the moral elements required, and what provisions it

must contain, the Divine sovereignty could not depart therefrom, and could not wish or will to do otherwise than pursue the plan at whatever sacrifice Infinite Wisdom prescribed. Nothing contrary to the nature of God could enter into the plan in the first place, and nothing out of harmony with his authority and rule as moral Governor of the universe could ever be admitted. Arbitrary action at variance with the Divinely-established order was impossible; hence, if redemption be effected, it must come about in regular process of governmental proceeding. It must of necessity be by the readjustment of legal relations, through an intervention adequate to uphold the authority of the Supreme Ruler and the righteousness of his law, while permitting the intended benefits to flow freely to the redeemed. This was the problem of redemption, and when its solution, as revealed in Christ, is apprehended, the necessity of the great sacrifice as a part of the scheme appears too clearly to be set

aside by any slight objections raised in our short-sighted reasoning. The overpowering argument is that the sacrifice was made. If redemption could have been effected without it, there is every reason to believe it would have been done; for it can not be that the demand for the humiliation and death of the innocent victim was made needlessly. Its only justification is on the ground of necessity, in order to the end to be secured. Then, its necessity in order to the end being conceded, the only question remaining is as to whether the end was of sufficient value to the moral universe to justify the expense. Here again we fall back upon the wisdom of God. He who alone could estimate at once the value of the sacrifice and of the proposed result willingly and freely made the sacrifice. In his judgment the end was worthy of the expenditure.

That the death of Christ was necessary in order to the restoration of men to possible salvation is fundamental in any rational view

of the atonement; and when this is admitted, the implications are very serious and far-reaching. It follows that the conjectures of men are erroneous in holding that God could righteously forgive sin on the simple ground of repentance, without any sacrifice or any satisfaction to the claims of his law. This old Unitarian contention is utterly fallacious. It opposes every principle of equity in government, and reduces the Divine administration to the condition of subjection to the caprices and emotions of the governed. Besides this, it involves the serious implication that the Divine Son came on a needless errand, submitted to unnecessary humiliations, and offered himself in fruitless sacrifice. Forgiveness of sins is, in fact, connected with his death, which would not be the case if pardon were possible or were granted on the sole ground of repentance and reformation. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." In addition to this

is the fact that both the privilege and grace of repentance come through Christ. After his resurrection, it is written of him, "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." "It behooved him," was necessary. He was under bond, not only that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, but because of covenant obligations assumed in view of the antecedent necessity which caused the sacrifice to become the ground work of the whole mediatorial scheme. The obligation thus lies back of the promises and prophecies of the Scriptures, locating the necessity where we place it, in the imperative requirements of moral government.

From the fact that the death of Christ was necessary it further follows that God sustains

no natural relation to men as Creator that assures salvation. In other words, the fact of creation does not establish a relation that makes men children and heirs. This is not the ground of hope. Men are not children of God because he created them in any sense that brings spiritual advantages or gives title to the Divine favor or heirship in the kingdom. This false assumption that all men are by nature the children of God is fraught with peril, not only to the essential doctrines of Christianity, but to the hopes of vast numbers of people, who cling to it with all confidence that, in some way, in the outcome of life, God must take care of his own. But many are God's creatures who are not his children. He owns none whose spiritual life is not the product of his own power working in them by the agency of his Holy Spirit. Not once in all the Scriptures, since Adam lost the image of God, and begat a son in his own likeness, has the relation of children in God's family been attributed to creation, or



to the natural birth, but always to redemption and adoption; or, which is the same thing, to the new birth, or spiritual regeneration. This is a crucial fact in this connection, and one of high significance in its bearing on all the lines of difference between the evangelical and the non-evangelical systems. It touches the vital point, because it implies the power in men to forfeit heirship, and all that heirship means. It assumes that sin affects the relations of eternity, as well as those of time. Men are so cut off from God that eternal alienation ensues, unless redemption restores the vital union, and establishes the relation with God which will secure personal acceptance here, and everlasting life hereafter. In the light of this truth the reason for the costly sacrifice appears; nor is there any way of justifying it on any hypothesis that makes all men the children of God by being born after the flesh. As Paul says so plainly, "They which are children of the flesh, these are not the children of God."

The doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God has been so persistently preached of late years, and with such enthusiasm, as to impress the busy, rushing masses that redemption was a trivial affair, a sort of make-believe intervention, with no serious consequences following its acceptance or rejection, everything belonging to eternal relations and destiny having been settled in the fact and law of creation. But this gratuitous assumption with regard to the Divine Fatherhood is not a new thing, although its greatest emphasis is of modern date. In our Lord's time some unbelieving Jews set up the same claim in his presence, and never on any other occasion did he exhibit deeper resentment, or use greater severity of speech, than when denying this claim, and rebuking those who made it. They were boasting of racial rights as the chosen people. First they said to him, "Abraham is our father." In the thought of the Jew this was a high claim, and one which was deemed all-sufficient and indisputable.

But Jesus desired to impress them that there was a spiritual relation with Abraham which was of more importance than the fleshly relation. So he answered them, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham"—having the spiritual relation in mind as the relation of highest value. Then, not grasping his thought, and perhaps being piqued that their boast was not conceded, they advanced the higher claim, and said, "We have one Father, even God." This assumption raised a question of fact. It was sharply stated, and must be admitted or denied. If admitted, it might justify the modern assumption of universal Fatherhood, or that all are God's children whom he created. Or, in other words, if this modern contention were sound, and if all are in fact God's children, then the claim of these Jews was right; and our Lord would have been compelled to acknowledge it. But he did not. On the other hand, he most vehemently denied it, and gave an answer which ought to

silence forever all pretenses to being God's children on the ground of creation or natural relation. "Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded and came forth from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye can not hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." Further along in this same conversation, he added to his answer, "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God." Surely, then, any doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood which holds or implies that men are naturally God's children, or children because of creation, or in any way so related to him as to exclude the necessity of redemption and adoption, in order to heirship in his family and kingdom, is not of God, but contrary to the plain testimony of our Lord himself. "He came unto his own, but his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he

power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Men become the sons of God by receiving Christ, and being born of God.

It is a reasonable supposition that if the sacrificial death of Christ was a necessity in the plan of redemption, he would refer to it in that light by word or act at some time in his ministry. As the disciples were dull of hearing, or slow to understand his allusions to his approaching death, it is not strange that little was said about it in his earlier and general discourses; but as the hour drew near we find recognitions of it, and after his resurrection he mentions it distinctly. In his discourse to the disciples whom he accosted on their way to Emmaus, he said: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" The rebuke for slowness to under-

stand the prophets was sharp, but the language shows that a right interpretation of the prophets would prove the necessity of his suffering in order to fulfill the Scriptures, and a higher necessity for it in the exigency of the divine government as the reason why the Scriptures through the prophets predicted it. Then, further along, after he had "opened their understandings," he declared the necessity of his suffering, and connected his passion with the gospel message of repentance and pardon. "Thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name." As "it behooved him to suffer," it was not only becoming and expedient, but necessary. He was under obligation to do it, now that he had assumed the office of Messiah. That he should suffer in order to make "repentance and remission of sins" possible was stipulated in the everlasting covenant.

Perhaps nowhere in the Scriptures is the

necessity of Christ's death more clearly or impressively set forth than in the record of his experiences and prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. The preparations for the final hour were nearly completed. He had delivered his last extended discourse, offered his intercessory prayer, instituted the memorial of his death, and retired with his disciples to the quiet of the garden, there to encounter the betrayal and the beginning of the tragic end. Choosing three of his trusted followers, he with them separated from the others, and then leaving them alone for a little time, he prostrated himself on the ground, in the darkness of the night, and entered into the deepest agony of his humiliation and sorrow. After saying to those nearest him, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," he fell on his face, and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." After this he prayed the second time, saying, "O my Father, if this cup may

not pass from me, execept I drink it, thy will be done." Then he prayed the third time, saying the same words. Of course, something will depend on the meaning of the "cup" which he prayed might pass from him. It seems evident, however, that the "cup" signified the culmination of his suffering, the last of the agony, not yet experienced—not that of the garden which had just caused the exclamation, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death;" nor that which accompanied the prayer, causing his sweat to become drops of blood falling on the ground; but that which still awaited him, the crucifixion and death. As a man of keen sensibility, he instinctively shrank from it, with the dread which was natural, yet calmly submitted unhesitatingly to the will of the Father. Who can doubt that he would have been spared that "cup" if there had been any possibility of securing the object of his mission without drinking it? Or who can doubt that it would have been "possible" to let that



cup pass, except for the high moral necessity for the sacrifice, which was as absolute as the justice of God?

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in commenting on this garden experience, uses strong language, and illumines it with holy thought, connecting it with the priesthood of the Son of God. He no doubt looked upon it as the beginning of his priestly function, the complete consecration of himself to the sacrifice, in which he offered himself, through the Eternal Spirit, without spot unto God. From the hour of this consecration he was on the altar. "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; called of God a High Priest after the order

of Melchisedec." This priestly prayer and consecration—this offering up of himself—marked the completion of his discipline and the perfection of his obedience.

His prayer was unto the Father Almighty, who "was able to save him from death"—showing the meaning of the "cup" he wished might pass. God was able to save him; for he had power enough, wisdom enough, and could command all necessary instrumentalities. He could send legions of angels. The prayer was "heard" and answered, for it was all summed and conditioned on the final petition, "Thy will be done." The formal request, "Let this cup pass," was also conditioned on the "possibility," which possibility did not exist. A petition based on a non-existent condition is not rejected when it is not granted, especially when the relief or benefit it seeks comes in another way, as it did in this instance. It was a cry for relief, and the relief came when the ministering angel of God strengthened him. Evidently

one of the purposes of this whole experience was to demonstrate the impossibility of his exemption from death, because of its absolute necessity in order to the end to be achieved—the redemption of the race through the “blood of the Lamb,” slain, in the purpose of God, from the foundation of the world.

The inquiry comes—What of this paradox? Why was it not possible for this cup to pass, seeing that God was able to save him from death? Or, why was it said that God was able, if indeed it was not possible that the cup should pass? The seeming paradox in the record is not difficult of solution. God was able to do it, and yet it was not possible for him to exercise his ability under existing conditions. We are able to do many things which in fact we can not do. The mother has the power and ability to destroy the life of the child of her love, yet she can not do it. Moral considerations, as well as emotional, control the exercise of her ability. In determining the question of possibility, all the

moral considerations involved, as environments of the case, must be taken into the account. When the scheme of redemption through atonement was determined on, it was settled forever that the sacrifice should be made. It was so stipulated in the covenant, and had been foretold in prophecy, and in type; and in the Divine promise, confirmed by an oath, it had been pledged. The covenant and promise and oath of God must not fail. God could not prove false. He could not deny himself. Therefore he could not spare his only begotten Son. Moral righteousness, as changeless as the nature of the Deity, forbade the failure of redemption.

Taken as a whole, the real lesson of Gethsemane is, that the sacrifice of Christ, as an offering for sin, was indispensable, in the sense that the salvation of sinners was impossible without it. There was both occasion and necessity for the atonement, and therefore that he should drink the "cup" to the dregs, which he did gladly and willingly.

## V.

THE necessity of the atonement—or, which is the same thing, the death of Christ in sacrifice for sin—will still further appear in the progress of our study of the efforts which have been made to explain the relation of this great sacrifice to the salvation of sinners; or, in other words, in what must be said of the expositions or theories of atonement, which fill so large a place in theological literature.

Neither the limits nor the purpose of this writing will permit large occupancy of this field, and happily it is not necessary in order to an intelligent grasp of the subject. The more prominent theories have become so well known that to mention them is enough to bring up the leading thought which each was intended to emphasize. Without attempting

a full list of theories, or an analysis of them, all the needs of our study will be met by considering the salient features of those which have had the widest influence in the past, and which command the most extended approval at the present time. It is needless, as it is difficult to group or classify theories of atonement, as any grouping will be imperfect, and divisions and subdivisions will abound in any possible classification, as the details of each theory shall be taken up for critical examination.

There are theories yet in the Church, which may be traced by the curious back to the days of Augustine, but with accretions, losses, and modifications, as the centuries have swept over them. Few, if any, will accept all that Augustine taught on the subject. The doctrine of Anselm, or the theory with which his name became identified, has been permanently influential; but scarcely any one will own himself to be a disciple of that astute divine of the eleventh century. Calvin and Arminius

were later known as champions of different views of redemption, each giving his name to a system of doctrines, and each holding some vital truths which will live through the ages; but neither expounded the atonement so as to become a standard for us, or to satisfy the thought of the present generation. Modern thinking looks beyond these men, beyond the "schoolmen," beyond the "Latin Theology," and beyond the Greek fathers, and seeks to draw its inspirations fresh and warm from the Sacred Oracles. We care little for the particular shadings of thought expressed by any one whose name has been prominently connected with this subject in the past, except to the extent that he has thrown light on the meaning of the Scriptures, or helped to a knowledge of the truth as held and taught by the apostles of our Lord. We want to push beyond all theorizing, if possible, and get at the underlying principle, the heart and soul of the doctrine itself, and to estimate it in the best light that comes to us from any quarter

or any period. We are not to reject a doctrine because it is old, nor to receive a theory because it is new. Our question is not whether a doctrine is old or new, but whether it is consistent with right conceptions of Divine government, and with positive revelations of the holy Scriptures.

Theology has become—nay, has been for long—a very technical science. Of necessity, it has acquired a terminology of its own, and it would be unwise to ignore this fact, or to treat lightly the words it has brought into prominence. Such words as “vicarious,” “substitutional,” “governmental,” “satisfaction,” “equivalent,” “commercial,” and especially the phrase, “moral influence,” have been so used as to have become indispensable in studying the doctrine of atonement, and we must accept them and treat them fairly. It can not be said that each is the name of a distinct theory, although each has been so used, and has some appropriateness as descriptive of the particular feature of the doctrine



intended to be given prominence. But this list of words can not be used as a classification of theories, for the reason that several of them have place together, and belong in the same theory. We can not speak of a "substitutional theory" very well, because any theory containing the idea of a substitution in the atonement comes under the head of "vicarious," or "vicarious atonement" carries the full idea of substitution, and includes all "substitutional" theories. The same must be said of the word governmental. That also is a substitutional theory, and vicarious as well. So the technical use of the words "satisfaction" and "equivalent" belong to this same class. They all relate to the vicarious sufferings of Christ. The word "commercial" is applied to certain views of vicarious suffering which are not much avowed, but which are supposed to follow other views that are avowed, the word "commercial" expressing results repugnant to the Scriptures and to reason. Thus it is seen that the word "vicari-

ous" is a very general term, sufficiently so to include nearly all theories that do not come under the head of "moral influence," which is also a rather vague expression to denote theories which are not theories, of an atonement which is not an atonement. An atonement which is real is made by the vicarious sufferings of Christ, while nearly or quite all that is supposed to be designated by the words "moral influence," is of negative character, consisting of denials of what the friends of a real atonement assert. Of course, the advocates of the moral influence idea recognize the fact that Jesus suffered and died, and that his death is a large factor in the Christian system; but, denying that it was judicially substituted for the penalty of sin, they claim that it benefits men by its exemplification of the self-sacrificing spirit, by its confirmation of the teachings of the great Master in Israel, and by its powerful appeal to the sympathetic and emotional elements in human nature, while it is the ground or source of

pardon only as it is the means of inducing repentance and confession.

The doctrine of atonement, as held by the Methodist Episcopal Church, as has been already seen, is sufficiently generous and broad to include whatever is properly contained in the words "vicarious," "substitutional," "governmental," and "satisfaction"—not all that is sometimes attributed to these words, but all that rightfully belongs to them as technical terms descriptive of atonement. Besides this, our doctrine has a place and use for all the "moral influence" that can possibly go out from the suffering Christ, so that we join heartily in the warmest commendations of his self-sacrificing spirit, and of his noble example of loyalty to the truth, even to martyrdom and death. We glory in the cross, in every aspect of it; as the symbol of patience, meekness, fidelity, goodness, and beneficence, as well as the symbol of the sacrifice which redeemed us from the penalty of sin.

It is rather more accurate to use the word

“vicarious” with reference to the suffering of Christ, than with reference to the atonement, as it was by his vicarious suffering the atonement was made, while the atonement itself, as a result of the suffering, can not be said to have been vicarious in any appreciable sense; yet, in view of common usage, and of the improbability of any serious misleading, the common expression, “vicarious atonement,” need not be regarded as objectionable. The suffering which became the atonement and effected redemption, is looked upon as vicarious, and therefore as substitutional, because he who suffered, suffered not for himself or on his own account, but for the race of mankind, whose nature he assumed, and whose sins he bore. In some way, possibly beyond all human comprehension, he stood for the race, embodied in himself the whole of humanity, or so represented it that the nature he offered in sacrifice was as nearly the nature that sinned as it is possible for us to conceive—for was he not in fact that “second

Adam?" As the whole of human nature was in Adam, and the entire race was potentially in his loins when he sinned, and received the effect of sin—not the guilt or penalty—so the Lord from heaven, the second Adam, represented humanity as a solidarity, and potentially the individuals of the race, and in this representative capacity laid down his life, and thus "tasted death for every man." The racial identification of Christ with us was most complete, carrying a deeper meaning than we catch from the surface of the words. A recent writer not inaptly asserts that we were ideally with him in all that he did; were with him in his crucifixion, in his death, in his resurrection, and in his glorification. He was literally put to death, and all whom he represented died with him, were buried with him, and arose with him, not physically, but constructively. This ideal and constructive crucifixion, death, and burial with him has in it much for us that is real; for it is to be realized spiritually in our death unto sin,

and our living again unto righteousness, when we “put off the old man, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Then shall we be able to say with Paul, “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” When all that he did for us, in his race identification with us, is made over to us by faith in him, then, and not till then, shall we be “complete in him.”

Thus was our Lord in the fullest sense our Representative, our Daysman, our Mediator. He put himself in our stead, made his soul an offering for our sin, died bearing our iniquities, and redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. We all like sheep had gone astray, every one to his own way; but the Lord made to meet upon him the iniquity of us all. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes are we healed. As he had no sin of his own, and yet suffered for sin, he suffered for others, in the place of others, and for their benefit—

that is, vicariously. All this affirm the Scriptures. The testimony is in the prophecies, in the types, in the promises, in narrative, and in epistle; and so we believe, and, believing, we seek to interpret the fact—the most wonderful fact in the history of the moral universe—without any distortion, and without omitting any element in it that astounds us by surpassing the narrow limits of our understanding. It is to be accepted as a concrete fact, a fact of history, developed and enacted in the world of human life and observation, and yet belonging in its ultimate relations and significance to the realm of the invisible and eternal.

Accepting the general statement that the sufferings of Christ in atoning for human guilt were vicarious and substitutionary, we come to the question around which have been fought the hottest battles of the ages of theological warfare, and which are yet without decisive result. The question is still pending. In what way, and to what extent, were

the sufferings of Christ a substitute for the suffering of the guilty? So far as this question relates to mode, or to the how of the transaction, it must remain undetermined. But there are points raised by it which we ought to answer, at least proximately, or so as to satisfy the demands of our faith. Many answers have been given, and these have given rise to theories or conjectures which must not be ignored, although they can not be pursued exhaustively, nor so far as many will deem desirable. A sentence or two must suffice where pages would not be out of place.

Possibly the oldest answer, and the one most prominent in thought when the question is up, is that which represents the suffering which Christ endured as corresponding exactly with what the sinner would have suffered if left unredeemed and required to bear in his own person the penalty of the law. The literal transfer of the penalty from the sinner to his substitute is taken to be the meaning conveyed by the word *vicarious*, and



also by the word substitution, when these are employed in explaining the atonement. It is perhaps not going too far to assert that this meaning is always in mind when objection is made to the doctrine. Unbelievers and "liberalists," so-called, are apt to attribute this meaning to all evangelical teachers of vicarious sufferings. If their contention were correct, and if the words would admit of no other construction, it would be necessary to abandon the use of these terms, and to seek other words to be made the vehicle of thoughts which we know to differ widely from the sense sought to be put upon them by the opposers of our faith. Methodists do not believe that the penalty of sin was transferred to the Savior; nor do they believe, when they understand their own doctrine, that the penalty was inflicted on him, or that his suffering was penal in any sense. It was a substitute for the penalty. It is not to be denied, however, that some Churches accounted orthodox, and individual writers among ourselves, have at

times given reason to opposers so to interpret the words in common use. Augustinian predestinarians and high Calvinists do so continually, and with intent, while others follow them inadvertently, causing the whole doctrine of substitution to suffer ridicule. We sorrowfully admit this, and deplore the fact and the result; yet we insist that intelligent writers and preachers are inexcusable for confounding Arminian and Wesleyan teaching with these old Calvinian doctrines, and for persisting in objections which apply only to these antiquated distortions, and can not lie against the substitutionary doctrine as held by a large majority of the evangelical Churches of our day.

If Methodism be not tolerant, she denies her origin and the spirit and genius of her institutions. In her leniency she sometimes bears with imperfect and even erroneous representations of her faith, and has failed to formulate a theory which covers the exact point now before us; but the trend of her

teaching is unmistakable, and the point at which she diverges from the arbitrary and mechanical substitution of Calvinism is not hard to find. In holding to a suspension of the penalty of sin in order to the development of creation and the propagation of the race under a remedial scheme founded in redemption, with probational advantages graciously furnished through the mediation of Christ, we repudiate as vigorously as do others the transfer to Christ of the penalty of our guilt, and declare it impossible as well as unreasonable that the Holy One of God should be punished for what transgressors did. He suffered, but he was not punished; he intervened, not to bear the penalty, but to arrest and suspend it, in order to give us a new probation. The difference here is broad and vital. Some have taught that the death of Christ was an offering made to the devil, to induce him to release his claim on humanity—as if his usurpation could constitute a claim!—a thought than which nothing could

be more abhorrent to Christian sentiment; and yet to attribute this to all who believe that Christ suffered vicariously would scarcely exceed in unfairness the prevalent habit of attributing to them the belief that his death was a judicial infliction of the penalty of sin.

This notion of the transfer of the penalty had a place and significance in the old predestinarian doctrine of what is called a commercial atonement, as part of a covenant made between the Father and the Son before the foundation of the world, in which the Father gave the Son a certain and definite number of souls in consideration of his sacrifice—a trade of so many souls for so much suffering. For this definite number he is supposed to have suffered the penalty of the law, releasing them forever from all liability to suffer it over again for themselves, thus making their salvation, as God's elect, absolutely infallible. One can scarcely think of anything more repugnant to the Scriptures, and to all evangelical thinking, than this; and yet this

almost unthinkable weight of absurdity is sought to be loaded on the evangelical doctrine of vicarious suffering, and would be, if we would consent to step aside and permit our liberalistic friends to define for us the doctrines we hold. Of course, we disclaim sympathy with such a perversion.

The idea comes in here that, while the death of Christ was not the penalty of the law in kind or degree, it was, nevertheless, an equivalent as well as a substitute for the penalty. This is widely held, and is not a stranger in Methodist pulpits. Of course, it is not so objectionable as is the transfer theory; but there is reason for hesitation and for guarding it with limitations and definitions before giving it favor. The fact is, we have no scales for weighing equivalents. It is impossible for us to estimate the penalty of sin, and surely it is not less difficult to form a judgment of what would be an equivalent for it. Fortunately this duty is not devolved on us. None but God could

estimate moral values in this connection. Surely, in fixing the value of the offering made in our behalf, account would be taken of the dignity of the person of the Son of God, of the purity of his life, of his disinterestedness, and of the voluntary character of his interposition; and who shall say that the sacrifice was not equal in moral value to the penalty which it was intended to displace? We can not say yes or no on the abstract point. It is not for us to know the worth of the penalty or of the substitute, nor is it well to think of the atonement as a balancing of moral values. There was a gracious element in it which we must not eliminate or cover into obscurity. Just how much Christ suffered, and what was the value of his death, and in what way his merit availed for our redemption, we can not know, and need not know. The how of his achievement is outside the range of legitimate inquiry. Nor can we tell whether it required a greater sacrifice to redeem the race of mankind than

to redeem a man—whether he felt the weight of the sins of the numberless millions more than the weight of one sin. He died for principle. Neither quantity nor numbers can have much place in moral estimates. If his death was a full equivalent for the deserved penalty for the whole race, one is induced to ask wherein is the grace of forgiveness after the full equivalent has been paid? The question is natural, and yet it is not conclusive. If the offenders themselves had paid the price and set up the demand for release on the score that the claim against them had been discharged, there would be the appearance of justice in it; but this claim will not bear the test of merit when the offended party gratuitously furnished the equivalent which met the obligation. The most that could be held in this event would be that, while the discharge from penalty was a gratuity, it was nevertheless a right secured, and as really belonged to the beneficiary as if he himself had bought it. There

is force in this, and little chance to establish the justice of any further liability to the penalty after the obligation to it has been discharged by an equivalent, no matter whence the equivalent came. Without disparaging the value of the substituted suffering of Christ, we still hesitate to admit this idea of an equivalent. It might justify the sentiment of the song, "Jesus paid it all;" but that does not bring it into harmony with our best conceptions of a provisional redemption, with the graciousness of the pardon offered and conditioned on the acceptance of Christ, with full liability to the penalty in the absence of this acceptance. The design or intention of the sacrifice is an element vital in this case, and it was certainly not designed to destroy or set aside the penalty, or to cancel all obligation to it; for that has not been done. But it was designed to arrest the penalty and to place humanity on salvable ground, with a probation of personal responsibility and all needed



helps to overcome weakness, and to meet all gospel demands of obedience and loyalty to Christ.

Within the memory of people yet living, the great question to be met in studying the doctrine of the atonement had reference to its extent. In books on divinity large space was given to this phase of the subject, much larger than to the nature and design of it. Calvinistic authors contended for a limited atonement, holding that Christ died only for the elect, yet affirming that there was sufficient value and merit in the blood shed to have redeemed the whole race, if such had been the Divine intention. Others, not Calvinists, and Methodists in particular, asserted broadly the universality of redemption, and emphasized the high value of the sacrifice, showing it to have been equal to any and all demands of righteous government and a worthy ransom for the entire race. Of course, stress was laid on the fact that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted

death for every man. Of late little is said of the extent of the atonement. Indeed, in modern conception, extent is scarcely attributable to it, but only to the applicability of its benefits, all which is covered by its design. But it was in this controversy that thinkers fell into the habit of exalting the value of the sacrifice into an equivalent for the penalty.

Then, turning aside from the question of equivalents, which leads from revelation into pathless fields of conjecture, it is necessary to study still further the sense in which our Lord's sufferings were substitutionary when he bore our sins and redeemed us with his blood. Of course, we do not escape speculative inquiry in pursuing this point, but we may keep in sight of substantial fact and reason.

He acted as our Representative, in our stead, when, as High Priest, he offered himself in sacrifice; and as he did not suffer the penalty, which was not executed, he suf-

fered somewhat and in some way so as to meet the necessity of the relation he assumed, and to arrest the enforcement of the law. As already remarked, just what amount he suffered, and how his death availed for us, is beyond our knowledge. Here the Church makes no deliverance. Our best writers have not been as clear on this point as on some other phases of the great subject. Richard Watson was forceful and conclusive on the Divine government, showing necessity for atonement, and on the extent of the possible application of its benefits, but was less definite on the nature of the transaction, although he dissented from the Calvinistic idea of penal sufferings. Dr. Miley was rather fearful of the idea of "satisfaction" as a possible helper to the notion of a penal atonement, but took solid ground on the point of substituted suffering, which was not penal. His position in this respect is fully indorsed by Bishop Foster, and is probably as accurate a representation of Methodist thinking

as Methodist literature affords. He touches the heart of the matter when he tells us that Christ's suffering was not the penalty of sin, but a substitute for the penalty. We can consistently stand upon this expression. It carries the substitutional idea legitimately and to the right extent. But it must be understood that the substitute did not absolutely cancel the penalty. It only suspended it till after probation, while its final execution is to be averted by personal acceptance of Christ and loyal obedience to him. The atonement thus gives room for the mediatorial scheme and all remedial agencies. It is the ground of our living as well as of our hope. Accepting this statement that what Christ suffered was a substitute for the penalty, it follows that the substituted suffering differed from the penal, and we hold that the difference was in kind and degree. First, in kind. Jesus Christ could not suffer the penalty in kind for the reason that he could not become unholy, or experience the consciousness of

sin. The penalty included the sense of guilt, with conscious condemnation and remorse, and all that makes up spiritual death. But he who bore our sins never died spiritually; for that implies the loss of holiness. Whatever his grief or pain, it was in consonance with purity. The sense of innocence could not have left him for a moment. The high motive of his sacrifice was the support of his courage in the darkest hour of his agony. Even when the presence of the Father seemed to recede, extorting the anguished cry, "My God, my God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" there was no condemnation. The sense of guilt was forever foreign to him.

Second, in degree. This must include intensity and quantity. Here we are at sea. We can not fathom the depth of his woe. He possessed all our sensibilities, so that pain was as real to him as it is to us. Nor did the nobleness of his character diminish his susceptibility to suffering. It rather quickened it, giving edge to every pang that rent his

soul. No human being was ever more fully alive to the dreadfulness of humiliation, or felt more keenly the bitterness of grief. But if he suffered more intense anguish than any man ever suffered, it is still not possible for us to conceive of his sense of pain being equal to what it would have been with the sense of guilt superadded; and, besides this, the element of duration must be eliminated, as it can not be with those who bear the penalty of their own sins. But comparisons are difficult where the quantities are unknown. As in person he was *sui generis*, so in suffering he was unique. He suffered for us—suffered as only he could suffer—enough, in the Divine estimate, to be a sufficient declaration of righteousness to warrant the suspension of the penalty, and secure life to the race under the gracious provisions of redemption, without destroying liability to future punishment for continuing in sin.

At the point in the ante-mundane ages,

when redemption was determined, the Son of God was ordained to meet the foreseen crisis in the world of humanity, when the abuse of moral freedom should result in transgression, so that the first sinners of the race, instead of meeting at once the penalty of disobedience, as under the rigid legal economy they must have done, they might find justice hand in hand with mercy. As has been well said, redemption was not an afterthought devised and brought in upon man's apostasy—the result of a surprise—but a provision in hand, ready to go into effect immediately on the occurrence of the occasion for it. In the mind of God the sacrifice was foreordained, and the result assured, so that when the foreseen possibility became an actuality, the redemptive scheme met the emergency without delay, the first sinners passing from the covenant of works to the covenant of grace, and at once beginning life in the new probation. Then, in the fullness of time, he who was by Divine appointment both Priest and

Sacrifice, came forth in the plenitude of grace, to lay down his life for the sins of the world. As before appointed, he stepped into the breach with just the kind and degree of suffering necessary to declare the righteousness of God, uphold his authority, satisfy the demands of public justice, and start the race under the new terms of life suited to the condition of those who are weakened and degenerate through sin.



## VI.

AS ALREADY remarked, the Methodist Episcopal Church holds tenaciously to the doctrine of the vicarious sufferings of Jesus Christ, believing and teaching that his death was a "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world."

The purpose of this redemption, however, was not to cancel the claims of the law, or to make personal salvation inevitable, but to suspend the rigid operation of the legal economy, so far forth as was necessary to permit the development of the race in the personal existence of the posterity of Adam, with a probation suited to the condition of descendants of progenitors corrupted by sin, and inheriting natures inclining them to evil. The design of the atonement was to do this, and

to afford to all men the possibility of salvation through the acceptance of the grace offered them.

While regarding this doctrine as fundamental, the Church does not put forth a formulated explanation of that which is acknowledged to be a mystery beyond human comprehension, as to its method. The fact, with its necessary contents, stands forth clearly written in the pages of the Gospel, its motive being God's love for humanity; but beyond the interpretable record lie unapproachable mysteries, with unknowable relations and results, filling with wonder the spiritual intelligences in the heavens, till eternity shall reveal the deeper meaning. Here we know in part, for we now see through a glass, darkly; but, standing in the presence of the unrevealed, we reverently adore the wisdom of the Infinite Father for what he has given and for what he still withholds, rejoicing especially in the manifestation of Jesus Christ as the all-sufficient Savior.

Among theologians of our Church, who speculate, as do others, and reason from what is revealed to what is not, the conjectural explanation of the atonement, known as the governmental theory, finds large favor. It is substitutionary inasmuch as it sets forth the death of Christ as a substitute for the penalty of sin; and since it holds that the sacrifice was pre-eminently an administrative act, maintaining the integrity of the Divine government while extending leniency to sinners, the designation of it as a governmental theory is not inappropriate. When it is distinctly identified as a theory, or as the best attainable explanation of the purpose and design of the great sacrifice, it is perfectly consistent for Methodists to accept it as fairly representing their belief as to vicarious atonement.

In proper Methodist thought, the remedial scheme is a unit. It is one scheme. Of its several parts, each one is necessary, and all are adjusted to work together, so that the

absence or failure of one would be ruinous to all, so far as the work or purpose of the scheme is concerned. The suspension of the retribution, the renewal of probation, the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, his official work as High Priest and Intercessor—all these belong to the system, and, in the mind of God, were complete before the foundation of the world. Sin was not a part of the scheme, but the occasion for it; and the judgment to come is to make final exhibition of the reserved right of eternal justice, and to vindicate the Almighty in the establishment, progress, and outcome of the plan of rescue devised as a remedy for an existing evil—a plan conceived in the wisdom and love of God, on foresight of man's disobedience.

This view leaves no spot for the feet of those to stand upon who represent us as holding that Christ died to induce the Father to become willing to permit the salvation of men. Of course, there was never

the shadow of a conflict between the Father and the Son, but perfect concord in all the counsel of the Godhead. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Moved by the impulse of his own love of pity, God saw the crisis, knew the necessities of righteous government, and, as Ruler, without the least bending of rectoral justice, lifted all barriers to the outflow of his compassion. He did it at a cost which is the marvel of the universe, but which displayed the infinitude of his love as was not possible in any other way.

As the sacrifice was so necessary in this plan, the shafts of unbelief are all turned against it with all the bitterness of enmity against God. Skeptics of all grades—Unitarians, Universalists, liberalists, and nothingarians—unite in solid column to deride the truth and destroy it, offering nothing better in its stead than the barren skeleton of

an ethical hypothesis. It is wonderful how all the representatives of the contradictory elements in this heterogeneous mass of opposition unite with singular oneness of motive, and become amazingly jealous for the honor of Divine justice, which to them seems endangered by the permission of an innocent person to indulge the self-sacrifice to which his love impels him. All with one accord denounce vicarious suffering, as attributed to the Son of God in the doctrine of atonement, as a cruel wrong, which violates every sense of justice, and contrary to the Scriptural principle which declares that "the soul that sinneth shall die." Of course, any objection to a doctrine based in Divine justice ought to have the fairest consideration; and this one must have.

It must be observed that wherever this objection is urged, it is applied to a view of the doctrine of atonement which we do not accept. It first represents the vicarious suffering as a case of vicarious punishment, or

as the infliction of the penalty of sin on a person who was not guilty, while the actual sinner goes free. A judicial proceeding of this kind would be at variance with every one's sense of ethical justice, and would find no tolerance in human courts. It ought to be a sufficient answer that the objection totally misapprehends the case, and loses its force by missing the mark; but unfortunately the friends of the Calvinistic notion of a penal atonement too often give ground to the objector by representing Christ as being judicially punished, or as receiving the penalty of our sins. Often very serious consequences follow inaccuracies of statement, and seemingly slight theological differences involve principles as momentous as eternity. This is an instance of the kind. The difference between a penal and a non-penal atonement is very wide. All the real force of this objection vanishes when it is shown that there was nothing penal, nothing of the nature of punishment, in what the Savior endured for

us, nothing involving "condemnation" or "wrath," and nothing which he did not freely accept. It was on his part the highest manifestation of the self-sacrificing spirit, a spirit commended by the enemies as well as by the friends of vicarious atonement.

Another aspect of the case is also important. It is that our respective interpretations do not affect the historic fact that Jesus died for sinners. In some way he suffered and died, and the record says it was "the just for the unjust," and whether, as a substitute or as an example, the fact remains—and all must agree that the fact was in the plan of God, in full accord with justice and holiness, and in perfect keeping with goodness and love. If not so, it was not of God. Then we reach the conclusion, and challenge question, that there was no more injustice in permitting him to suffer as a substitute than in permitting him to suffer as an example or as a martyr—especially in the sense in which we use the word "substitute" in this connection.



The assumed wrong was not in the design or intent of the suffering, but in the fact of suffering—not in the quality of his sacrifice, but in the fact that an innocent person suffered that which he did not deserve.

In a state of perfect retribution, where law reigns without grace, no such thing could happen as that one man should suffer for another's sins. But in this life of discipline, such experiences are of daily occurrence. Parents rear a son with careful training, and fondly hope for comfort in his future. The son breaks over the restraints and examples of home, forgets parental love, and indulges evil passion, to his own ruin and disgrace; but he suffers not alone. The parents suffer the pangs of disappointment and grief, which exceed the suffering of the wayward son. In other instances, the father becomes the imbruted victim of appetite or passion, reduces his children to poverty, commits crime, and entails lasting shame and sorrow upon those innocent of any share in his wickedness.

Inequalities of this kind, which abound in this world, are a powerful argument for a life to come. Only the readjustments of eternity can right the wrongs of this state of trial and discipline. These compensations await sufferers here. So also the sufferings which Christ endured for men, on his part foreseen, accepted and willingly borne, should not be considered alone, but always in connection with "the glory that should follow." "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." It does seem possible, without violence to justice, for one of faith and loyalty to God to suffer in this world what would be painful injustice in a permanent state of being—a distinct proof of the probationary character of the present life. This appears to be an essential fact in all probational existence. One man's sins fall with crushing weight on other men's hearts and lives. Good and evil mingle freely, the righteous and the

wicked sharing in the common lot, with scarcely the shadow of adjustment to moral deserts, while not till the future are we to expect men to receive according to their works. Here the altruistic life commands the approval of the wisest and best, and the self-sacrificing spirit receives the highest praise. Why, then, should it be thought incredible that Jesus, the Son of God, should willingly accept a situation involving great sacrifice for the good of mankind, and which in the outcome would reveal the Father's heart, lift the world to a higher plane, and throw wide open the door of hope to the perishing? Why should there not be in the plan of redemption and in the life and work of the Redeemer the most conspicuous example of self-abnegation the world has ever known?

Just here is to be anticipated the appearance of the advocate of the moral influence theory. This is in no proper sense a theory of atonement, but a theory of God working for men, to attract them to himself, by means

of his love to them, seeking to impress their moral sensibilities, to arouse their gratitude, and to induce repentance and reformation by such exhibitions of Divine sympathy as ought to melt their hearts. This doctrine of moral influence from God displaces the true idea of atonement, whether we consider it in the light presented by Socinus, Abelard, Maurice, or Bushnell. It not only rejects penal satisfaction, but all kinds of satisfaction to law and justice, as of any value in the Divine estimation or in judicial administration, leaving no room for expiation or propitiation, except in a figurative or rhetorical way, as these terms seem to attribute to God passions and emotions he does not really possess. Yet we hail the coming of the man with the moral influence plea. There is doubtless something in it, and we have room and need for all the good it contains in the view of the atonement which we here maintain. He says: "Yes, the death of Christ on the cross was a wonderful example of un-

selfish love, an exhibition of unparalleled self-sacrifice, a display of unselfish devotion to duty, and so conspicuous an illustration of fidelity, that the study of it ought to inspire in every heart the noble ambition to emulate the virtues of a life so true, so beautiful, and so devout. It ought to produce deep conviction and powerfully convince the world of his own sincerity and of his unswerving loyalty to his mission as the Teacher sent to reveal God." We accept all this, and all other good things that may be said of the good influence of his death as a manifestation of love to the race and as a declaration of a benevolent interest in human welfare; but in all we see no redemptive power, unless we find in it, in response to the demand of administrative righteousness, a propitiation for sin, a price paid for release from impending penalty. After recognizing all the moral influence that can possibly flow from his crucifixion as an example of disinterested self-sacrifice for the good of others, we are

obliged to look beyond the moral effect of his example to find the deeper motive of his self-abandonment, and to account for its wonderful differentiation from the martyrdom of all others who ever died in attestation of their loyalty to duty and of their faith in him as their redeeming Lord. The Apostle Paul, for his sake, accepted a life of toil and privation, with persecution and imprisonment, and finally proved the heroism of his spirit in martyrdom; but the influence of his death was never held forth as a redeeming power. His moral influence as a man was great, while his fortitude in suffering and his courage in meeting the foes of his faith will ever be an inspiration to the Church; but no redeeming merit was ever ascribed to his death. Thousands have died as Paul died—and as Jesus died, if his death was simply that of a martyr—but out of the long line of witnesses, never to the death of one has there ever been ascribed virtue to heal and cleanse the soul, save to that of the Man of Nazareth. Why

is this? If only moral influence goes out from his death, why does not similar influence go out from other deaths? In what respect was his death so greatly distinguished from the deaths of a hundred others? Why is redemption through his blood? Why is his death the only ransom price? Why is he alone the propitiation for sin? In what sense was his death an offering, a sacrifice for sin? In what respect did he officiate as High Priest? In what way did the sacrifice of himself fulfill the typical offerings of the law and abolish forever the ritual services of the temple?

The ritual service of the Jewish temple was a device, a Divinely-constructed system of machinery, adjusted and adapted in all its parts to a specific end. That end was the adumbration, the visible shadowing forth of the real sacrifice for sin; and if it be a fact, as set forth in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that Jesus Christ was the Priest, the offering, and the Intercessor, the antitype of what was

typically portrayed, there is no escape from the conclusion that his death was the true offering for sin, the real expiation, the only atonement. Then this is the ultimate and spiritual import of the Jewish priestly services, pointing to the Christ as their fulfillment, and through him to the spiritual sacrifices of the heart, the personal faith and consecration of life, without which there is no possibility of sharing the provisional benefits of the atonement. If indeed he was the Great High Priest of our profession, then he did offer himself in sacrifice to God for our redemption; and as the dying Son of God he did uphold the integrity of the law and government of God to the end "that God might at once be just and the Justifier of him that believeth."

Protest is made by recent writers against what is regularly styled "Latin theology," meaning that form of doctrine which makes the Divine substitute pay the full penalty of sin, entitling the sinner as beneficiary to full



discharge, as the debtor is entitled to discharge when his debt is paid. Against this cold, dead, mechanical idea of atonement—this Shylock demand for the pound of flesh—we join in the protest; and we protest with equal vigor against all direct or insidious attempts to fix upon Methodism the reproach of that mediæval, commercial, penal atonement, which has neither place nor welcome outside of predestinarian fatalism. We insist upon the Pauline and Petrine doctrine of graciousness in redemption through the propitiatory sacrifices, which, instead of paying the penalty, suspends it, and restores men to a salvable condition, and places before them the offer of eternal life through personal conformity to the life and image of the Son of God. Salvation from sin is more than a question of debt. It is a question of character. Not a single element in the redemptive scheme looks to the supersedure of any obligation to obey God. The law, as a rule of life, is neither repealed nor lowered, but

grace, vouchsafed through the atonement, furnishes moral leverage to lift the weak and degraded to a plane where obedience is easy and a delight. The saved man is not only relieved from liability to punishment because of former sins, but he is renewed in spirit, renovated, "born again," and sanctified through the power of the Spirit of God. The atonement provides for all this, and makes it possible without in the least degree diminishing the necessity of a holy life. His sins were indeed a debt he could not pay, and their pardon or cancellation through the blood of atonement was an unspeakable relief; but this gracious act, instead of diminishing, enhanced his obligation to obedience, still leaving final salvation conditioned on loyalty to Christ and on the attainment of the righteousness of faith, which is the only fitness for the fellowship of the saints in light.

In all this we do not overlook the fact that modern scholarship inclines to look favorably towards a species of "evolution" which is

compatible with all that revelation teaches with reference to the creation of our species. We are not bound, in this study, to pay any attention to that kind of "evolution" which virtually denies the creation of man as a distinct act, and finds him a development from inferior orders of being by natural energies. But if there is an evolution that belongs to the law of our being, that is traceable in nature and indicated in revelation, it is necessary to recognize it to the extent of ascertaining whether it conflicts with redemption, or requires any modification of our ideas of the doctrine of atonement. Plainly no theory of "evolution" that refuses to man a distinct creation in the moral image of God, with a subsequent lapse into sin, can have place in the Christian system, or can have claim to attention in the study of Christian doctrines founded on revelation.

But it is contended by many Christian scholars that the law of our creation includes an element that is properly styled "evolu-

tion," which provides for the uprising of humanity to higher and better conditions through an upward struggle of the soul, and that the germ or inspiration of this aspiration and endeavor, being found imbedded in the structure of our being, must be attributed to the original creation and recognized as one of the forces which is to contribute to our better destiny. It is held, and properly enough, that this inward longing for a higher state is shown in the appeal made by the tempter, which found ready response in the first pair in their first estate, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Without doubt we may assume that the disposition to seek for a higher condition was an original endowment, given by the Creator for a good purpose, and might have found proper exercise in the primal state of uprightness; but that which was good, and intended for good, was transformed into evil, as all evil is but the perversion of good. When sin occurred, and the probation adapted to the first con-

dition of man was forfeited, the redemption ensued in time to arrest judgment and spare the offenders, who were passed to the new probation by virtue of the atonement previously ordained, with natures unchanged, except as to moral condition and inward inclinations. In this lapsed condition, "Adam begat a son in his own likeness," transmitting to his posterity the essential attributes and qualities of his being, as well as the tendencies superinduced by sin, all of which became elements in the probation instituted under redemption. Therefore this feeling of restlessness under present environments and the disposition to rise is indeed an endowment of the primal man, inherited under the law of our being, and not to be disregarded, as the gospel does not repress it but encourages and builds upon it.

Since redemption through the atonement thus rescued creation and took humanity as it was, with all its natural endowments, and placed it upon a new career of development,

with the gracious helps needed, and which come to their best efficiency under the Christian dispensation, it is safe to assume that there is no law of evolution which Christian scholarship is obliged to recognize, in which there is a recuperating energy out of harmony with the spiritual forces provided in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The essential law of creation is in full force under redemption, and all its provisions for human betterment are resultants from the grace which provided the atonement, and are the purchase of the great sacrifice.

It is therefore needless, in this study, to enlarge on the question of Christian evolution; for nearly everything depends on the particular ideas which each one attaches to his own use of the word. If he is, first of all, Christian in sentiment, believing heartily in the Scriptures, deferring in all things to their authority, and only seeking their right interpretation, there is nothing in any proper conception of vicarious atonement to give

him any trouble. All that belongs to man as a creature of God belongs to him as a redeemed subject of grace. His whole being, with its tendencies and aptitudes, with its vital forces and capabilities, belongs to the Divine plan of life, growth, development, and progress, founded in redemption, giving ample room for all the evolution that can harmonize with God's Word, or subsist in connection with the essentials of Christian faith. It is only necessary to hold that the redemptive scheme includes the creation of the race as it is, with the laws the Creator enstamped upon it, in order to see that there is no antagonism between the law of life and progress, under which humanity exists, and the evangelical doctrine of atonement—nothing whatever that calls for a modification of the doctrine as here presented.

## VII.

IN the outcome of this study, let us see that the office of the High Priesthood of the Son of God be duly honored in the work of bringing God and man together. His priestly function is the ground of all his peculiar relations, as Mediator, Advocate, and Intercessor. There is one God and one Mediator between God and men—the Man Christ Jesus. As Mediator he is the daysman, the go-between, the equal of either party, the representative of both, the only being in the universe qualified to meet the extraordinary emergency. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and hath committed to men the ministry of reconciliation. Being equal with God, he assumed our nature, and offered the approved sacrifice by which he obtained eternal redemption for us, and



passed into the heavens as our forerunner, where the mercy-seat, sprinkled with his own blood, is the throne of grace, ever accessible, to which all penitents are invited to come with boldness. This is God's work, and it is marvelous in our eyes. It reveals the Almighty as "a just God and a Savior." From the loftiness of his throne, exalted above all our conceptions of greatness, he stoops and yearns for the return of the alienated, and seeks to draw them in penitence to the foot of the cross for forgiveness.

The full reason for the necessity of the sacrifice may not be known to us; but this we know, that God would not have required it without good reason. It was certainly necessary to maintain the integrity of God's government and his authority as a ruler, while extending mercy to transgressors, and as a declaration of righteousness, and also to bring out some phases of the Divine character which could not have been so well revealed in any other way. But these are

only parts of his reasons, while the higher motives, hidden in the depths of his being and in his relations to the moral universe, are quite beyond the reach of our thought.

By a process of reasoning we might advance step by step to apprehend the fact that the law of God, being holy and unfluctuating, when broken, would demand its penalty, which demand might not be arbitrarily set aside; but when we see God incarnate in the person of his Son come into the conditions of our life, bear our burdens, and lay down his life in sacrifice for our sin, we obtain a new impression of him as a God of compassion, a lover of men, and as a lover of righteousness, as well as a more exalted conception of his law as an expression of love and justice blending in one glorious act of redemption.

In the conception of God thus gained, we avoid two extremes which are alike dishonoring to him, as well as dangerous to men. The first is the pagan, and sometimes an old Jew-

ish notion, which makes him the stern arbiter of fate, clothed in terrible majesty, content with his unapproachable greatness, offended and flaming with anger at the violation of his law, and refusing to abate the rigor of his wrath without the payment of the last farthing. Certain Calvinistic theories of atonement are adjusted to this conception of God. The other extreme looks upon him as more than humanly tender, even to weakness, grieving like a father over the waywardness of erring children, overlooking their faults, and begging them to give up their evil ways and accept forgiveness without regard to the claims of justice or the necessities of good government. But God is neither the one nor the other. He loves righteousness, hates iniquity, is kind and loving, ready to forgive on proper terms, and will by no means clear the persistently guilty. Impenitence is as offensive to him as rebellion ever was. The atonement can not cover the sin of persistent unbelief. The willful rejection

of Christ cuts off participation in the final benefits of redemption. As the atonement was not a legal setting aside of the verdict of condemnation against sinners, by reason of the substitute paying the full price of their disobedience, but a gracious provision whereby forgiveness becomes possible through repentance and faith, so the conditionality of forgiveness is as real as was the sacrifice which made the offer of pardon possible. As God could not save sinners without a Savior, so he can not save them with a Savior denied and contemned. As the Savior himself could not save without the shedding of his blood, so neither can he now save those who reject him and treat his blood as an unholy thing. He it is "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the forgiveness of sins that are past"—and the "faith in his blood" is as necessary to make the propitiation available for the sinner as was the shedding of the blood itself. If so, then the

folly of trusting to the fact of the atonement for salvation, without accepting and honoring it, is manifest to every one. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

To hold that men are forgiven and saved simply because Christ died for them is one of the weaknesses of ignorance, the rock on which many split. It grows out of thinking of the atonement as a contrivance to save men without their consent—a sort of mechanical device to lift them to heaven, instead of a gracious provision to secure them a fitness for it. Such a scheme is not the gospel; and all who trust in it lean on a broken reed, while those who spend time and strength in belaboring it, as if it were held by the evangelical Churches, spend their strength for naught. Salvation "through the blood of the Lamb" is not by mechanism nor by syllogism. It requires the concurrence of the

will and the unreserved surrender of the heart.

Still the claim is persistently put forth that repentance is the adequate ground of pardon, so that not only is it proper for God to forgive sins solely on this ground, but that God is bound to do it, or can not afford not to do it. The assumption is that repentance makes it right in Divine government to forgive all who repent, and consequently wrong not to afford all such the necessary helps and encouragements to repentance. Under existing conditions there is apparent force in this. Men are called to repentance with the assurance of pardon; but this is under the gospel. Repentance is necessary to pardon, but it is not the ground of pardon. The ground is the atonement. What the terms would be, or would have been, without the atonement, no one can know. In fact, we can know nothing about the world of might-have-been. We have good reason to believe that without the atonement there would have

been neither men nor repentance. The executed penalty would have cut off the first offenders without posterity. That would have ended the race of Adam. Too little account is taken of this fact. The death of Christ secured the existence of the race, the probation allowed us, the power to repent, and all the advantages that life affords. Why, then, talk of repentance without the atonement? Why think of forgiveness without the death of Christ? Such thinking is absurd, or, rather, preposterous. It omits the major proposition. Christ is our life. Because he lives, we live also. It requires thought to place Christ before Adam and the atonement before the creation of man; but we must think these identical thoughts before we grasp the true situation. Christ was verily foreordained before the foundation of the world was laid. This plainly-declared fact has meaning in it. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Redemption was not an experiment. God knew what he was about. He

made man capable of going wrong, saw that he would go wrong, and made provision to give him another chance. That provision for another chance was in what we call the atonement. It was not wrought out to completion till Calvary; but in God's knowledge Calvary was so certain that all of the new probation was based upon it. Its merits rolled back to the first transgression, as well as forward to the end of time. It is time we were learning to appreciate the atonement. Human life, probation, repentance, pardon, adoption, sanctification, all come from the atonement, from the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Repentance, as the ground of pardon, without the sacrificial death of Christ, is ably discussed in nearly all works on systematic theology, and such discussion seems necessary to the completeness of the argument, whatever theory of atonement is favored; but in this study it is passed as an incidental matter, on the ground that God would not



do an unnecessary thing; and as he did most certainly give his Son to die for sin and for sinners, there must have been most urgent necessity for it. In actual fact repentance and pardon are preached in the name of Christ. This is God's plan of saving sinners. We know of no other. We do not believe there is another. This plan has a place for repentance, makes it possible, and assigns it an office which nothing else can fill; but it treats repentance and faith and obedience, and everything in men that might be supposed to be meritorious in God's estimation, as fruits of atonement. On this ground we stand, and for this reason we reject every suggestion that any of these things could be, or could fill the office they now fill in the redemptive scheme, if there had been no atonement.

After all, the question recurs, Why could not the Infinite God, with all the resources of his being and of his universe, save sinners without the expensive process which he or-

dained? Why not some shorter road to this end than the incarnation, death, and resurrection of his only Son? Where was his omnipotence? Where his sovereignty? Why not, with the majestic sweep of his right arm, wipe sin from the universe? Men will reason thus; and they must be heard patiently. The argument, if allowed, is against the existence of evil at all. If sin might be brushed away by Divine power, it should never have gained footing in the fair creation. If its occurrence, or the removal of it, were a question of power, everything relating to it would assume a different aspect. Or if natural and moral evil were subject to the same law, the problem of the latter would be modified. Natural evil pertains to the physical universe, and follows the order of natural law, its results coming of necessity; but moral evil belongs to a different department of creation, and has to do with moral beings and with moral laws, quite distinct from natural laws. If this were not true, and if the moral free-

dom of rational beings were not a factor, the problem would be much simpler than it is. But here is the adamant fact. Intelligence and freedom are essential to morality, to moral good as well as to moral evil, to virtue as well as to vice. Sin belongs only to the realm of freedom. It is not a substance, but an event. It is an act, an act of a responsible agent, in willing if not in doing something tangible, or that takes the full character of an act. Behind every sin is the spiritual entity, the personal agent, who is endowed with rationality and freedom. This agent thinks, knows, wills, is intelligent and responsible, and therefore is not subject to the natural law that governs matter. Force governs matter; but force has no place in the moral world. One might as well attempt to persuade a marble statue to leap from its pedestal as to undertake to coerce a human soul into virtuous obedience. Motive, not force, rules in the rational world; and motive influences, but does not coerce. The mind

considers motives, weighs them, and makes choice among them when they conflict, often with an alacrity that eludes memory, and with a freedom that seems spontaneous, but so that the free acceptance of one leaves the inherent power of an opposite choice intact.

Even God acts in all things with motive or design. We can not conceive of him as doing anything without a purpose. That we do not see his motive does not argue its non-existence. As no power beyond his nature impels him, his action is always free, and always in consonance with his attributes. He can not act contrary to his nature. He can not do and not do. He can not deny himself. He can not maintain government over rational and responsible beings without permitting the exercise of volition to the extent of an evil choice. In this ability to choose lies the ground of responsibility, and the source of moral desert, whether good or ill, the source of all that makes character. It is therefore clear that power could not hinder sin without destroy-

ing freedom to the extent of nullifying accountability and obliterating moral distinction. If there be any such thing as physical law, it can apply only to physics. If any law, natural or supernatural, is adapted to govern material things by coercion, its presence in the spiritual world is an obtrusion, with destructive or revolutionary results. Law that governs spirit must be adapted to spirit, and operate in harmony with the nature of spirit. This excludes coercion, even by the power of God. Force from God would destroy freedom as readily as would force from the physical world. Hence salvation from sin must be studied not as a question of power, but as a question of moral achievement. It is not as to what God could do by his omnipotence, but as to what he has done in the exercise of his wisdom and love.

With these principles in mind, let us sum up the facts. God chose to create a world of rational beings capable of moral action. He invested them with the necessary power, the

power of choice. Some of them abused that power, and sin is in the world. Whether by direct permission of God or not, it is here. It has entered the world of humanity, has touched the essence of the human soul, has breathed upon it a corrupting taint, and given an evil bent to all its faculties. In the soul sin has become a malady, a moral leprosy, a spiritual gangrene, eating its vital energies and inducing spiritual death. How can it be eradicated? "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." It can be done only by moral means, or by spiritual agencies working in harmony with the invincible nature of the soul. Hence the inadequacy of omnipotence alone. The righteousness of God, moral justice, and the inflexible law of holiness, must come into the account. The authority of the Divine government, whose right sin has disregarded, must be vindicated, so that God can not only be just and righteous, but be declared so to be, as well as a merciful and gracious sovereign,

in dispensing pardon to penitents. Here is the problem of redemption, the necessity of atonement. Here is the exigency in God's moral government which gave occasion for the Priestly office of the Son of God, and rendered his incarnation and sacrifice indispensable in order to avert the penalty of sin and make salvation possible. This exigency was not a fiction nor a rhetorical trope. It was as real as is righteousness, and as formidable as omnipotence. Its occurrence has been the dismay of finite reason through the ages; for reason and faith stand aghast in the presence of the power and ravages of sin. The need of Divine intervention is apparent, but the method of the remedy is unknown till revealed in the presence of the incarnation of Deity in human flesh. Then the dreadful-ness of sin is seen as never before, and the sternness of the demand for a Divine sacrifice becomes a factor in our apprehension as distinct and clear as is our perception of justice as an attribute of God.

When taken into the understanding to the extent of possibility, this moral exigency, with all its depths of mystery, clothes the stupendous fact of the incarnation and suffering of Jesus Christ with characteristics worthy of Infinite Wisdom and Love, showing occasion for his mission and results commensurate with its sublime purpose. But take away from the redemptive scheme the absolute necessity of the sacrifice, because of the deserts of sin and the claims of righteous government; take away the invincible freedom of the will and the immutable nature of violated law—eliminate from the government of God this moral exigency—and you destroy forever the possibility of finding either love, mercy, justice, or righteousness in the advent and crucifixion of the Son of God. If there was no exigency requiring it, no actual necessity for it, growing out of moral conditions—if salvation had been possible without it—if by reason of any natural relation he sustained to unredeemed humanity, God could have come to the rescue



by supreme prerogative, and arrested the tide of evil without the sacrifice, then the atonement was needless, and the suffering of Christ, being without necessity, was purposeless and cruel. Instead of being a display of the Father's love and a demonstration of righteousness, his death becomes a spectacular mockery. Neither justice nor love could approve an unnecessary sacrifice; nor could a mere pretentious display accord with any perfection of the Deity. He who denies the existence of a moral exigency, or its possibility in Divine government, with the alternatives of the perishing of the race in the loins of the first transgressor on the one hand, and the interposition of God with a Divine sacrifice on the other, cuts off all possibility of giving a rational reason for the undisputed facts in the history of Christ—casting upon the whole scene of Calvary the dark shadow of an unreal pretentiousness and a cruel deception. If the incarnation and sacrifice were not imperative on the ground of necessity, they were at least

meaningless and misleading as to their design.

The fact stands forth abundantly attested that Jesus Christ died for the ungodly. "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." The grand purpose of his life culminated in his death. The gospel accounts for it all in setting him forth as a "propitiation for the sins of the world." According to his own words, his blood "was shed for many for the remission of sins." In it the typical blood of the Passover was fulfilled. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." Because he died in sacrifice sinners can come to God through him, and God can receive them graciously without impairment of his law, or any slight to the requirements of public justice. The whole proceeding was governmental, and its justification was in the occasion for it, its necessity. This

is the mystery of mysteries, the hidden wisdom which was not made known in the earlier ages, but is now manifested to the glory of God's grace throughout the Church on earth and in heaven.

Thus the priestly office of our Lord was more than a name, more than a picturesque fulfillment of Jewish types, more than an Oriental symbol of an unreal expiation; for to the eye of enlightened faith it appears, as it is in reality, the embodiment of the wisdom and love of God, the impregnable foundation of the hope of humanity. It was by filling this office to perfection, and meeting the great moral dilemma through the offering up of himself that he obtained the right to save men. His atonement was at once the matchless demonstration of God's intrinsic holiness and abhorrence of sin, and the most glorious manifestation of his love to men. In the presence of this mighty achievement through sacrifice the intelligent universe bows reverently

before "the Lamb slain" and the Savior exalted, exclaiming, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!"





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